

THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

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COURTESY MVVA

MVVA TO TRANSFORM GROUNDS AROUND SAARINEN ICON

MEET 'EM IN ST. LOUIS

The team led by the landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA) has been selected to reinvigorate and expand the parkland surrounding the

St. Louis Arch, designed over forty years ago by Eero Saarinen with a landscape by Dan Kiley. The project aims to better integrate the Arch

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PHILLY DEVELOPER NIXES GRAIN ELEVATOR PLAN

COURTESY ISA

Silo Saved?

A feud over the future of Philadelphia's last grain elevator has come down on the side of preservation instead of adaptive reuse, after developer Pearl Properties bowed to pressure

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CCNY RECLADS A LAB FOR A NEW DECADE OF DEVELOPMENT

AHUA PARTNERSHIP ARCHITECTS

Science Experiment

The Marshak Science Building, for decades the only laboratory facility at the City College of New York, is getting a major facelift. At the same time, it's losing pride of place on campus. The 13-story concrete structure, designed by SOM in 1971, is currently undergoing a rehabilitation of its original concrete facade, and receiving a completely new

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COURTESY NYCHA

NYCHA PLAN TO SELL HARLEM PUBLIC HOUSING LAND FOR CHARTER SCHOOL

SCHOOL ZONE

A pending deal to build a charter school in the heart of a public housing develop-

ment could herald a new long-term strategy for the cash-strapped New York

City Housing Authority (NYCHA). The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), which has provided education and services to underprivileged children since 1997, is in talks to buy a plot of land at the center of the St. Nicholas Houses in Central Harlem, home to one of the highest percentages of unused NYCHA development rights in the city.

With the help of a recent \$20 million donation from Goldman Sachs, HCZ plans to build a combination charter school and community center on 130,000 square feet of open space in St. Nicholas, which spans a superblock from 127th to 131st streets, between 7th and 8th avenues. Children of the residents of

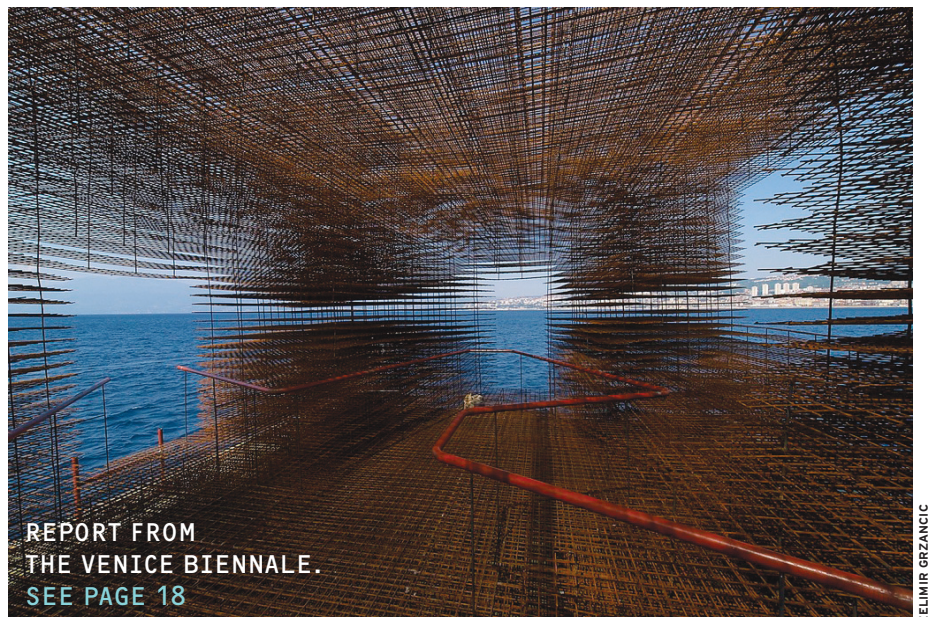
continued on page 6

AUGUST BILLINGS TICK UP, BUT SHOW LONG SLOG AHEAD

OUT OF THE TROUGH

Though still a long way from robust, the AIA's Architecture Billings Index inched upward for the third straight month in August, signaling

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REPORT FROM THE VENICE BIENNALE. SEE PAGE 18

ZELMIR GRZANIC

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WHAT'S IT WORTH?

The Venice Architecture Biennale began in the 1970s as an outgrowth of the much older art biennale. The first exhibition was a competition to renovate a local Venetian building, and then, in 1976, it featured a small exhibition on the modernizing effects of the 19TH-century German Werkbund along with a survey of contemporary practice. This survey format would become the dominant approach of almost every subsequent biennale. But it was not until 1980, when Paolo Portoghesi installed his now legendary “Strada Novissima,” that the architecture biennale became an event of international significance, transforming the conversation in the world of architecture and launching, for many people, postmodernism.

Today, architecture and design biennials take place in major cities all over the world, in Istanbul and São Paulo, Lisbon and Gwangju, Korea. While all these exhibitions slightly devalue the impact of an every two-year survey of current trends, the Venice Biennale is still an exhilarating experience and the most anticipated event in the architecture world. It is the best place to take the pulse of architecture and a professional networking experience that conventions like the AIA can only dream about recreating in the sterile convention halls of San Antonio or Phoenix.

But there are signs that the Venice Biennale—or, more precisely, the format of the grand, expensive temporary exhibition on architecture—may no longer be relevant to architects. At this year’s biennale, exhibitors and attendees speculated that the biennale format may have outlived its usefulness and should be abandoned. Some of this is a reflection of the ubiquity of communications and image-making on the web, but it is also a feeling that the money would be better spent on solving more demanding issues, like poverty and affordable housing. I would reject the puritanical notion that only architecture projects that seek to end global injustices are worthy of consideration. Yet I know from experience that staging an exhibit in a national pavilion for the Venice Biennale costs about \$400,000. There are rumors that, this year, the Austrian pavilion cost in excess of \$800,000, and that the German pavilion, showing only framed drawings, still cost \$650,000. If you add all that up, plus the work shown in the Arsenale, and not to mention the parties, the hotel rooms, and the airfare for attendees, this is a \$20 million to \$30 million affair, and an increasingly flashy two-month party.

Boost as it is for the local economy, it may be time for the organizers of the biennale to re-think their format and formula in a way that controls costs but maintains the inclusive and experimental nature of the exhibition. It will not be easy to lower costs in Venice, where everything must be brought in by barge. But just as the Republic of Venice lost its preeminence over the eastern Mediterranean centuries ago, the Venice Biennale could become just another trade show. Given its brief but important history, let us hope they figure out how to keep it fresh and relevant. How I would miss going to La Serenissima every two years! **WILLIAM MENKING**

OUT OF THE TROUGH continued from front page

continued progress along the track toward recovery and lending some credence to the National Bureau of Economic Research’s recent pronouncement that the longest and deepest post-World War II recession on record is officially over.

The billings index for architectural firms surveyed by the AIA rose to 48.2 in August, up slightly from a reading of 47.9 in July, according to numbers released by the AIA on September 22. Offering further optimism for the future, inquiries for new projects also increased last month to 54.6 from 53.1 in July. That number, however, has bounced downward in recent months from a rally that reached 60.7 last November, suggesting that considerable volatility remains in real estate circles as clients take a wary approach to new projects. (Any score above 50 indicates an increase in billings or inquiries, below 50 signals a decrease.)

While the August numbers are heartening news, the overall picture points to what may be a slow slog toward growth, since billings have not yet broken back into positive territory and broader economic trends offer little cause for celebration. “I expect it to continue to move up, but move up fairly slowly in the months ahead,” said Kermit Baker, chief economist for the AIA. “It doesn’t seem like there’s much propelling new activity, so it’s going to be a fairly prolonged time before we see much acceleration.”

The brightest spot remains the commercial and industrial sector, which continued its push into positive territory as the only sector above the 50 mark, showing a reading of 50.6—the fourth straight month of positive growth. Baker cited early signs of job growth and an uptick in business confidence, which has translated into a modest increase in corporate and industrial work. “We’ve had a pretty strong year of business investment on the software and equipment side, and that usually leads to a recovery on the building side,” he said. “We’re in the early stages of that.”

The other sectors showed no such pluck. Institutional work, which has wavered over the past 12 months, took another downswing in August, ending a two-month rally and sliding to 46.0, down from 47.9 in July. The residential sector, which has been stagnant since February, performed similarly, ending the month at 46.9, down from 47.5.

Regionally, the trends were more encouraging, with the upswing in manufacturing activity pushing the Northeast above 50 for the first time since May, to 50.9. The Midwest and West also increased, to 49.2 and 45.8 respectively, while the South, continuing to battle the aftershocks of the housing bust, ended a five-month trend of growth, dropping to 45.3.

As bittersweet confirmation, the Northeast’s good fortune was seconded by real estate investment firm Eastern Consolidated, which found that New York’s construction industry added 1,700 jobs in August, making it the city’s second-best performing sector after retail. But in reporting those figures, *The Real Deal* noted that contractors’ relative good cheer definitively didn’t spread to design firms, which continue to be plagued by layoffs. In fact, the city’s architecture sector lost another 200 jobs last month, according to the report, bringing the yearly total to 1,200 vanished jobs—4.8 percent of the workforce this year and a whopping 22.8 percent since August 2008. **JEFF BYLES**

LETTERS

ONE MORE FOR THE BOOKS

Your recent article about next-generation libraries is a fascinating read (“Check It Out,” *AN* 15_09.22.2010). I wanted to bring to your attention our design of the South Jamaica Branch Library, which was honored to have received the AIA’s Committee on the Environment (COTE) Top Ten Award in 2000. Designed by Carl Stein, acting as principal-in-charge, it is one of only five such projects in New York City, and is also the first building designed under the NYC High Performance Building Guidelines for the Department of Design and Construction.

Among the building’s many features, the saw-tooth shape of its roof not only introduces sunlight into the main reading room, but also promotes hot air stratification, concentrating at the peaks. The building has

two return/exhaust air systems; one collects air at the peaks and the other collects air near the floor. In the winter, the hot air from the peaks is recirculated throughout the building. In the summer, the hot air from the peaks is exhausted and the cooler air is recirculated.

The building established goals to consume significantly less energy than that allowed by the New York State Energy Code: 62 percent less for heating, 34 percent less for cooling, and 48 percent less for lighting. Unsurprisingly, the actual electric meter readings after two years of operation demonstrated that the building has outperformed these goals: by 30 percent for heating and 50 percent for lighting and cooling.

TOM ABRAHAM

**ELEMENTAL ARCHITECTURE
NEW YORK**

CORRECTIONS

A report on the conversion of Harlem’s P.S. 90 into condominiums (“Home Schooled,” *AN* 14_09.08.2010) misstated the number of schools closed across New York City in the 1970s. While 14 public schools were closed in 1978, dozens were closed over the course of the decade.

A description of Cannon Design’s Sparkling Hill Resort in our annual glass feature (“Through the Looking Glass,” *AN* 14_09.08.2010) omitted several credits for the project’s structural system. While Stella Custom Glass Hardware designed elements of the tension truss system, the frame system was designed by Read Jones Christoffersen and the tension cable system was designed by Erdevicki Structural Engineering.

AD'S NEW GUARD

Philip Johnson and **Paige Rense** must have been fueled by the same elixir of eternal professional life, both of them always on the verge but never leaving the spotlight. Years have been spent handicapping who would be Rense's successor at the helm of *Architectural Digest*. A decade ago, the name bandied about was **Paul Goldberger**, who did an unlikely stint at the magazine as executive editor before jumping ship to be architecture critic at *The New Yorker*; more recently it was editor-at-large and man-about-LALAtown, **Mayer Rus**. Then with sudden swiftness, 40 years into the job, Rense brought down the hammer in October to tap *Elle Décor* editor-in-chief **Margaret Russell** for the job. Russell didn't waste any time herself cleaning house, and marshaling her own new rank and file, calling up *Town & Country* veteran and architecture buff **Sarah Medford** to be executive editor, former *Elle Décor* editor-at-large **Mitchell Owens** as special projects editor, and **Robert Rufino**, formerly senior editor-at-large for *House Beautiful*, as interiors editor. Attention, hut! Update your rolodexes.

VIVA BRASILIA!

Brazilian furniture designer, surfer dude, and architect **Carlos Motta** was in town recently for "Semana Carlos Motta," a series of events that no one knew they needed but turned out to be pretty inspiring. Motta makes his stuff from demolition residue and reclaimed wood. Tempted by the titular promise of "tropicalism, sensuality, and furniture," Eavesdrop headed for the High Line aerie of Phillips de Pury for Motta's week-ending talk on "Collecting Brazil." Attendees picked a path through **Boteros** and **Camargos** before taking a right at the obligatory **Campana Brothers** stuffed animal chair (estimate: \$20,000-\$30,000). Motta hypnotized the crowd with a free-form slide presentation of his curvy, witty designs (including a chair inspired by Havaianas flip-flops). Somehow it all made sense. "That's comfort," he said, as the crowd attempted to nestle into their Lucite seats. Motta emphasized that while Brazil doesn't have much of a history in furniture design, the country is teeming with anonymous design classics. "Brazil is becoming richer," ended Motta. "Well, maybe not richer...but less poor." And we all drew a little comfort knowing there's only one way to go from the bottom.

WE HEARD AT A PARTY

That 100 Eleventh Avenue developer **Alf Naman** was dismayed that **Jean "Loves Black Interiors" Nouvel** made the lobby of his sparkly new condo so dark, and decided to interview several architects for a do-over. Word has it that the developer has hired interior designer **Jennifer Post**, known for her all-white decors.

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PAUL WARCHOL

> CHANEL SOHO

139 Spring Street
Tel: 212-334-0055
Designer: Peter Marino Architect

Longtime Chanel collaborator Peter Marino has redesigned the label's Soho boutique as a new hub for fashion-as-art. The renovated luxury store, which included an expansion into the space next door (formerly home to high-end French swimwear boutique Eres), opened its doors on September 10 for Fashion's Night Out. The design was inspired by the artsy spirit of the neighborhood, using a crisp, black-and-white color palette and exposed tin ceilings as a backdrop for the wares on view. Marino worked with input from Chanel designer Karl Lagerfeld, opting for a youthful and vibrant interior. To that end, a number of artworks animate the space, including an acrylic Chanel No. 5 bottle that stands over 10 feet high and will display video art on its 15 screens—not to mention video feeds from runway shows in Paris—along with commissioned artworks by Peter Belyi, Alan Rath, and Robert Greene. The boutique's design is such a hit at Chanel that the company's global creative director Peter Phillips has created a new makeup line paying homage to Marino's sleek aesthetic.

ALYSSA NORDHAUSER

NEW TAX RULES BOOST INVESTMENT IN REHABILITATION

BANKING ON PRESERVATION

At the end of August, Governor David Paterson signed into law a piece of legislation that could have a significant impact on financing upstate historic preservation projects. The legislation will allow banks and insurance companies to apply the state Rehabilitation Tax Credit against their New York State franchise tax liabilities, a move that is expected to bring new private investment to preservation efforts.

Banks and insurance companies are among the most frequent users of federal historic preservation tax

credits, so they are expected to take advantage of the state credits in similar measure. Prior to the legislation, companies based outside of New York could only apply the credit against their general income tax liability, reducing the incentive for many companies to invest in rehabilitation projects. Now, out-of-state banks and insurance companies may apply the rehabilitation tax credit program against their state franchise tax liability. (The state credits are generally not available for use in New York City, as they are

designed to apply only to certain low-income census tracts.)

One project in Buffalo is already seeing the benefits of the legislation. With the investment of Minneapolis-based US Bank, the Hotel Lafayette in Buffalo, which dates from the turn of the last century, is being renovated into rental apartments, retail and event spaces, and a boutique hotel. It had previously been a single room occupancy building used primarily by beneficiaries of local social service agencies. Designed by Carmine Wood Morris Architects, the project is expected to be complete in 2011, in time for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's conference,

A Buffalo hotel gets restoration funds.

which will be held in Buffalo.

Still, the impact of the legislation is likely going to be diminished by another package of tax credit deferrals that were included in the state budget passed earlier in the summer. Those deferrals put a \$2 million cap on tax credits through 2013. "Even as we move one step forward, the state took two steps back with the tax credit deferrals," said Daniel MacKay, director of public policy for the Preservation League of New York State. MacKay hopes the legislature and the governor will address the deferrals in the fall.

ALAN G. BRAKE



COURTESY CWMA

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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER OCTOBER 6, 2010



Like candy to Trick-or-Treaters, the autumn ritual of getting into places usually barred to the public is a design-lover's delight. On October 9 and 10, Open House New York celebrates its eighth year of offering access to some 300 locales across the city, from the latest in trendy (an unopened stretch of the High Line) to the pre-Revolutionary (the Conference House on Staten Island).

Architects, natural and knowing guides to important design, are among the most discerning when choosing places to go. (Updated list is at www.ohny.org). While the two tours—for only 15 people each—of 1 World Trade Center will likely have been booked within minutes of the website launch on September 29, *AN* offers our own hit list of the three most desirable places to visit: the viewing platform at the top of the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment “Egg Beater” Plant (above, left) in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, designed by Ennead Architects; the Islamic Cultural Center (far left) of New York by SOM on the Upper East Side, completed in 1991 but rarely open to the public (and a good opportunity to see what Islamic cultural centers are all about); and finally, don't miss a flashlight tour of the Atlantic Avenue Tunnel (left) to view some good old New York infrastructure up close.

JULIE V. IOVINE

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A CHAPEL COMPOSED WITH PHYSICS AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT IN MIND

TO THE LIGHT, AND BEYOND

Christian Science Reading Rooms are usually closed to the outside world. Five years ago, however, New York's Tenth Church of Christ, Scientist began a major renovation of its Greenwich Village home to transform the previously concealed space into a light-filled Infinity Chapel. The church engaged Victoria Meyers and Thomas Hanrahan of Hanrahan Meyers Architects (hMa) to design the new sanctuary, including a reading room and below-grade Sunday school. Both church members and architects were interested in a serious exploration of the properties of light in space.

The commission came to

the office, Meyers recalled, after the client encountered a book she was writing, *Designing with Light*, and sought her advice on creating a new model for their sanctuary. She was flattered but surprised, as the book had not yet been printed. (It was published by Abbeville Press in 2006.)

The design process resulted in a remarkably layered sequence of spaces. "We crafted a curvilinear interpretation of a cube that was 'opening' through the action of light," Meyers explained. "Surfaces peel back to reveal other spaces beyond the cube." In fact, the interlocking experiences of space, light,

and form guided the entire design from the beginning. "In this sense, we really saw the chapel as a contemporary interpretation of a four-dimensional figure—a hypercube." The challenge was to dissolve and layer not only the experience of light and space, but also the visitor's sense of time.

To that end, the Infinity Chapel's walls are imagined as disembodied white planes shaping natural light and defining the larger geometries. The interplay of curving planes implies "the shape of a 'Klein bottle' or Möbius strip, simple figures that suggest infinity by having no beginning and no end,"

Meyers said. The interior is designed as a procession from the street to a reclaimed back garden, with clear views through glass partitions into a 3,000-square-foot reading room and a 4,000-square-foot, double-height sanctuary.

Against these evanescent curves, solid materials ground the design and become physical focal points—books in the reading room, oak benches in the sanctuary, and old-growth Ash planks atop the pulpit and librarian's desk. A series of "light tubes" puncture a polished concrete floor to connect the reading area and Sunday school spaces and transform what could have been a dark basement

into a luminous classroom.

Meyers appreciates the church committee's interest in the "scientific" aspects of light that inform the design, an approach that parallels the spiritual practices of the congregation. This concern for the physics of light and its interplay on curving interior planes allowed Meyers to pursue "that spirit of creating

Top, left: The sanctuary with oak benches. Above: Layering brings luminous light into the chapel. Below: The reading room with "light tubes."

a space that was not simply pretty to look at, but embedded with a cerebral idea about space, light, and form."

BRANDEN KLAYKO



MICHAEL MORAN

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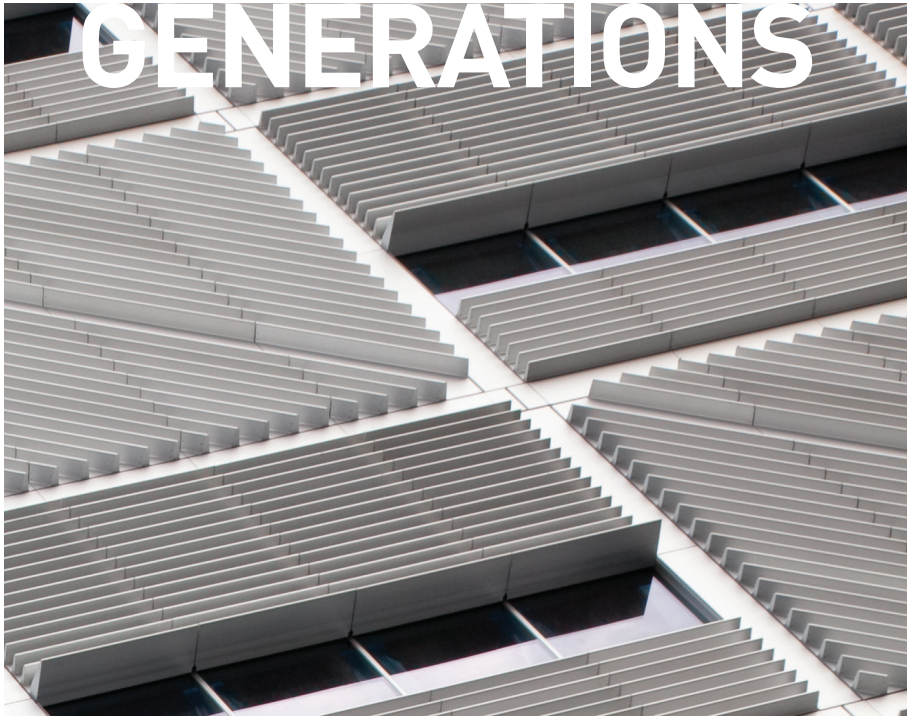


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SPANNING GENERATIONS



Building on the last remaining site in McKim Mead & White's **Columbia** campus wasn't the only challenge architect **José Rafael Moneo** faced in designing the university's new science center. It also had to be built atop a gymnasium without disrupting athletics. So **Arup** engineers envisioned the new structure as a large truss—its diagonals reflected in a daring crisscross façade—and erected it using an ingenious system possible only with structural steel. This innovation not only kept the gym in operation but also produced the vibration-free spaces so critical for laboratory work. As the final piece in a century-old campus puzzle, this new classic in a Beaux Arts setting proves there's more than one way to bridge a generation gap.

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Architect: José Rafael Moneo
Executive Architect: Davis
Brody Bond Aedas
Structural Engineer: Arup
Photo: © Adam Friedberg

SCHOOL ZONE continued from front page St. Nicholas would be given priority in enrollment, and the center would house classes for adults as well as universally accessible facilities like a gym and health center.

The deal affords NYCHA the opportunity to break up the superblock and reconnect it to the surrounding street grid. The section of West 129th Street that runs through St. Nicholas was demapped when the project was built, and it currently ends in a cul-de-sac before it reaches 8th Avenue. In order to provide a streetscape for the new school, and to make it easier for buses to pick up and drop off students, NYCHA has proposed extending West 129th Street all the way to 8th Avenue and putting it back on the New York City map.

The goal is a desirable one because, as the planning community learned from its experiments of the midcentury, superblocks can be isolating and difficult to police. "The idea [to reconnect West 129th Street] is that you would have more lighting, more eyes on the street, and more activity, which would

The site is within the St. Nicholas Houses complex.



JONATHAN CRISP

help increase the level of safety," explained Ilene Popkin, NYCHA's assistant deputy general manager for development. If all goes according to plan, St. Nicholas could set the stage for similar interventions in the future. "This has the potential to be a model," Popkin said.

The project marks a notable step for NYCHA in other ways. The agency has suffered budget shortfalls since 2002, with an estimated \$139 million deficit this year. Community services have been significantly cut to make ends meet, so NYCHA has been seeking to partner with private organizations to

pick up the slack. The way NYCHA sees it, deals like this one with a private developer solve multiple structural problems simultaneously: breaking up a superblock, reducing a major deficit, and providing additional services at the same time.

While some residents have worried that the HCZ sale represents a slide toward privatization that could end up putting public housing residents on the street, NYCHA insists those fears are unfounded. "It's a sentiment I encounter all the time, but there is no truth to it," Popkin said. "We are absolutely not selling the public housing."

JULIA GALEF



COURTESY HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES

UNVEILED

WILLOUGHBY SQUARE PARK

Another piece of downtown Brooklyn's 2004 redevelopment plan has been revealed. On Willoughby Street between Duffield and Gold, Hargreaves Associates will design a 1-acre public park as a gateway to Willoughby Square, a new address for commercial office buildings, residential and hotel towers, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music Cultural District.

With the idea of creating a welcoming space for weekday employees and residents alike, the street-level park will be built atop a parking garage and ultimately surrounded by restaurants and retail stores. Conceptual drawings from Hargreaves reveal a varied

topography, with tree-shaded lawns bordered by curved pedestrian paths, and bench and amphitheater seating.

In collaboration with the Brooklyn Historical Society and other groups, the city's Economic Development Corporation will also develop a commemoration of Brooklyn's role in the Underground Railroad and the abolitionist movement, to be included in the landscape. Construction of the square is expected following execution of the parking garage lease and Public Design Commission approval of the park's design.

JENNIFER K. GORSCHKE

Architect: Hargreaves Associates

Client: New York City Economic Development Corporation

Location: Willoughby and Gold streets, Brooklyn

Completion: TBD

FORDHAM PLAZA



FAR ROCKAWAY PARK



ZIPPER BENCH



TIMES SQUARE VISITORS CENTER



XINJIN LANDSCAPE BRIDGE



COURTESY WXY

Three letters have been cropping up with increasing frequency in the world of New York City design: WXY. A new identity for Weisz + Yoes Architecture, WXY Architecture + Urban Design is helmed by husband-and-wife team Claire Weisz and Mark Yoes, joined in 2006 by Layng Pew. Among the three principals and their employees, they have sufficiently diverse design expertise that the firm has managed to find its way into seemingly all levels of the civic design process.

Their spectrum starts large, with masterplans for sites such as Fordham Plaza and Astor Place, and then gets smaller: complete buildings like sanitation garages, houses, and restaurants; smaller kiosks and pavilions; and interior design and branding for

city information centers. At the smallest scale, WXY has recently ventured into the world of urban furniture, with signature benches and fountains appearing at such prominent sites as Battery Park.

Civic design in a city like New York can be difficult because of the preexisting baggage that comes with it: Buildings, infrastructure, traffic patterns, and history all need to be accommodated or worked around. But WXY uses those constraints as an opportunity, growing their design vocabulary for future projects. As Weisz aptly put it: “We learn from funny-shaped sites.”

JG

FORDHAM PLAZA
BRONX

A major transportation hub, Fordham Plaza serves 12 bus routes and a Metro North station, but suffers from serious design flaws, including traffic congestion and an unwelcoming station entrance. WXY devised a new masterplan for the city that proposes simplifying traffic patterns, making one street bus-only and relocating bus stops, freeing up 26 percent more public space in the process. Their plan puts that space to good use, creating a flexible plaza with an artificial lawn, bike racks, benches, and a new canopy entrance to the Metro North station featuring improved LED signage.

FAR ROCKAWAY PARK
QUEENS

A multipart project for Far Rockaway Park in Queens is the latest example of a recent signature theme for WXY: park buildings that bridge the gap between architecture and sculpture. “We were interested in finding a new vocabulary for waterfront beach parks,” Weisz said. That vocabulary borrows shapes from, among other things, parasols, gull wings, and unfurled beach towels. In addition to a 28-acre masterplan and a comfort station, the project includes a 156-foot-long, 18-foot-high trellis that runs along the end of the boardwalk, comprising five connected stainless steel parasols that cast striated patterns on the concrete seats below.

TIMES SQUARE
VISITORS CENTER
MANHATTAN

The task of redesigning the Times Square Visitors Center hit a sweet spot for the firm, combining “popular culture, a huge number of pedestrians, and brand identity,” Weisz said. WXY’s mandate was to renovate a landmarked movie theater, transforming it into an anchor for Times Square where visitors could buy theater tickets and memorabilia and view the famed New Year’s Eve ball. A curving reflective wall and old marquee poster cases fitted with interactive LCD displays riff on the people-watching theme.

XINJIN LANDSCAPE BRIDGE
XINJIN, CHINA

New York may be their primary focus, but WXY still takes the occasional exotic excursion. Xinjin County in China awarded the grand prize to WXY’s design for four landscape bridges, the first of which should be completed by June 2011. WXY’s design, developed with structural engineering firm Weidlinger Associates, will be replacing an old, overcrowded pedestrian bridge over the Nanhe River. Resting on five multi-limbed supports, the new bridge consists of two intertwined red ribbons—“like a flattened double helix,” Yoes said—that add interest to the crossing experience and double the bridge capacity.

ZIPPER BENCH
MANHATTAN

WXY’s urban furniture system manages to be highly modular without resorting to the easy-but-dull solution of rectangular geometry. A highlight is the sinuous Zipper Bench, crafted of steel slats, tubes, and laser-cut stanchions finished with a powder coating. It can be constructed from any assortment of the gently curving segments, some flat, others flanked by a backrest; some concave, others convex. Connecting modules create smooth transitions between the different segments, allowing for highly customizable shapes well-suited to wind their way around trees in landscaped parks like Peter Minuit Plaza.



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AN INVITATION TO BUILD IN CHINA SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, AND PROBABLY IS, SAY NEW YORK ARCHITECTS

China Confidential

It's not easy to detect a scam when none of the most basic ground rules are understood. So discovered a handful of New York architects when they were contacted six months ago by the Haoshun Investment Company about building an office tower and housing project in Henan province, China. Or so they now believe.

In recent conversations with several of the architects involved—including 1100 Architect, Della Valle Bernheimer, Eisner Design, Belmont Freeman Architects, Elmslie Osler Architect, and others—a picture emerges of a vast mixed-use development project. These designers were contacted by email or by phone, signed contracts, and bought tickets to fly to China, some even going so far as to visit the site, before discovering that they had been signing on for identical work. Yet mystery surrounds the stakes involved, as relatively little money was lost by any of the architects, apart from a few translation and lawyer fees, frequent-flier miles, some gifts and hotel expenses, and banquet costs not exceeding about \$80. No one turned over any design work.

The scam began for most in March or April, upon receipt of an RFQ email signed by "Peter (Project Assistant)," who appeared to be both point-man and translator. The project consisted of 90 sustainable villas and an office tower with a retail base. There was a PowerPoint and a website; both were plausible. Indeed one architect, who had previously been told to use an independent translator, hired an American-educated Chinese woman working in a Beijing gallery. She vetted the materials and conducted several phone conversations with the clients, but found nothing awry.

The speed with which contract details were agreed upon, followed by encouragement to come to China quickly for a signing, was disturbing, said the architects interviewed. It seemed too easy to iron out relatively generous fees, but as none of the designers had worked in China before,

that was not a deal-breaker. Many had paid their airfare to contract signings in the past, and were prepared to fly to China to visit the site. Two did, and others had tickets to go.

The site, between Zhengzhou and Kaifeng, is busy with construction, and seemed a likely enough location for a housing and business complex. The chairman or chief client, though not elegantly dressed and working out of a shoddy office, maintained a confident air through translator "Peter."

But New York architects constitute a close-knit community. Word got around when one spoke to an engineer who had already been contacted about the very same project from another architect. In another case, two architects sought advice from a more experienced colleague, who then put them in touch with each other.

When contacted about business rituals in China, Calvin Tsao of Tsao & McKown Architects, who has worked extensively in Asia, reacted in astonishment when he heard that the supposed clients did not pay for a banquet that had been arranged for the New York visitors. "I have never heard of a guest paying for the banquet, even in the smallest backward village," he said. "Airfare, yes. They will try to stick you with that; but if you say no, they usually will cover it. Never do anything out of pocket."

Tracing the story, most of the architects said they had heard from numerous advisers that working in China is so unpredictable that practically nothing is out of the ordinary—even being told, after giving the clients a new iPhone, that more gifts were required and could be purchased immediately at a nearby mall.

To this day, "Peter" sends out occasional emails, saying that reimbursements are on their way, and that there's plenty of work for all. "Everyone is so eager to work in China," said Tsao. "The country is so vast, there are so many opportunities, but also so much desperation. This is a cautionary tale for everyone." **JVI**





Passive House techniques were used by the New School team in their entry to the Solar Decathlon competition. Below: an early model.

NEW SCHOOL TEAM UPS THE ANTE IN SUSTAINABILITY COMPETITION

SOLAR BAKE-OFF

The Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon pits design schools against one another in a competition to design and build a cutting-edge sustainable house. Held every two years since 2002 on the National Mall in Washington, the competition draws throngs of visitors during its ten-day run. The houses don't stick around, though. Typically they are transported across the country or around the world and then back to the schools where they were built. This year, the multidisciplinary team of Parsons, the Milano School for Urban Policy, and the Stevens Institute of Technology, together with Habitat for Humanity's Washington, D.C. chapter and the D.C. Department of Housing and Urban Development, are turning their demonstration house into a permanent home in D.C., and then building a second home using volunteer labor. Following their completion, Habitat for Humanity plans to sell both units as affordable housing.

The student-led team began by questioning the very premise of the decathlon. "We're leveraging the competition," said Joel Towers, the dean at Parsons. The students and their respective institutions felt the decathlon could be used to explore and address larger planning and affordable housing issues. Furthermore, they questioned why the houses should be treated as mere demonstration projects. "In order to really move the needle on sustainability, you have to engage communities and address affordability," Towers said.

The New School team

constructively critiques even some sustainability standards of the decathlon. "They don't take the carbon footprint of these houses into proper account," Towers said of the two-time winners, Germany's University of Darmstadt, pointing out that it is hardly sustainable to ship a house back and forth from Germany. "There's something touristic about the whole competition. Nothing stays in Washington."

To increase their energy efficiency, both of the team's structures will employ Passive House techniques to minimize the amount of solar technology needed to generate electricity. "If you have a very well-developed envelope, you can get by with a very small heating and cooling system," said Parsons' Laura Briggs, the project's lead faculty member. In addition to architecture students, a number of lighting, interior, and product design students from Parsons will collaborate with planning and policy students from the Milano School and engineering students from the Stevens Institute. Over 100 students will work on the project, covering everything from fundraising and sponsorships to designing and fabricating the furnishings.

The first house will be built using modular construction at the Stevens Institute in

Hoboken, and shipped to the Mall for viewing in Fall 2011. Simultaneously, work will begin at the site in Northeast D.C., including construction of the second house. Following the decathlon, the first house will be moved to the site and joined with the second house. The competition house is a one-bedroom unit, while the second house will have three bedrooms.

In addition to building integrated photovoltaics, the 1,000-square-foot houses will include small green roofs and ground-level raised beds. "We wanted to add as many basic amenities as we could, so the residents can choose, for instance, to grow their own food if they like," Briggs said.

While Habitat for Humanity has not historically been known for pushing the design envelope, the team found an able and eager partner in D.C. "They were already building fairly high-performance buildings. They're quite an innovative chapter," Briggs said. Even though they have questioned the rules and outcome of the decathlon, the team hasn't given up its competitive spirit, Towers noted. "We're doing the kind of project we want to do as a school," he said. "But in the end, we also want to win."

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MVVA and team plan to activate the park with elevated walkways, skating rink, wild meadow, and a new entrance to the grounds.



MEET 'EM IN ST. LOUIS

continued from front page
grounds with downtown St. Louis, embrace the ever-fluctuating Mississippi, and create a new park across the river in East St. Louis.

Word that the MVVA team was the likely winner started to leak out on blogs four days before the official announcement was due, forcing organizers to release a statement on September 22. The MVVA



team bested a Who's Who of architectural, landscape, and engineering talent, including teams led by SOM Chicago with Hargreaves and BIG, Weiss/Manfredi, PWP with Foster and Partners

and Civitas, and Behnisch Architekten. Their advantage, however, was not star power, it seems, but rather a willingness to be practical. "MVVA is an outstanding team that presented a winning combi-

nation of the ambitious and the manageable," said Tom Bradley, superintendent of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, in a statement. "They showed great reverence for the beauty and significance of the existing site, while suggesting improvements and attractions in line with our competition goals."

The MVVA plan calls for a new entrance bridging the Arch grounds with downtown and creating a stronger axis between the memorial and the capitol, improving access from the north and south sides of the existing grounds, and adding new amenities, including a new museum at the entrance, a seasonal beer garden and skating rink at the south end, and a new amphitheater at the north end (a barrier parking garage will also be removed). The East St. Louis park will be significantly wilder in feel, with an elevated path offering views of the Arch and the treetops. The proposal also pays attention to ecological conditions, such as rainwater management and biodiversity.

The Van Valkenburgh-led team also includes Steven Holl Architects, Greenberg Consultants, Uhler Consulting,

HR&A Advisors, Guy Nordenson and Associates, Arup, LimnoTech, Pine and Swallow Environmental, Applied Ecological Services, Ann Hamilton Studio, James Carpenter Design Associates, Cooper Robertson & Partners, Elizabeth K. Meyer, Project Projects, Vector Communications, and ABNA Engineering.

Working with the competition organizers and stakeholders, including the National Park Service and the cities of St. Louis and East St. Louis, the team will begin revising their proposal according to feasibility and cost constraints. "Between now and January, we will be challenging the MVVA team to rise to the occasion to do what's best for the city, for the region, and for this national park," said St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay in a statement. "The Arch is a national treasure, but it is intensely personal to people in and around St. Louis." Competition organizers are also expected to announce a funding mechanism, most likely public/private partnerships along with a public authority, to finance and build the project.

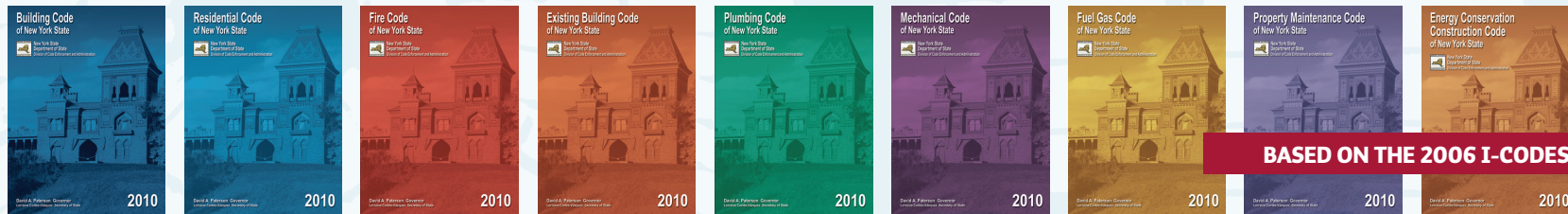
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EWING
COLE

New York City is the only town in the U.S.A. with more than one National Football League team. It has two: the New York Giants of the National Football Conference and the New York Jets of the American Football Conference. For more than 20 years, these gridiron superheroes coexisted more or less contentedly in the same facility—the 80,000-seat Giants Stadium (1976), which sat until very recently in the Meadowlands Sports Complex in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

It was more or less a happy arrangement because the stadium had been designed specifically for the Giants, featuring their colors in the seating, their heraldry on the walls of the concourses, and their old-school spirit in the utilitarian architecture. The Jets, who moved onto this hallowed ground in 1984 after fleeing an even less advantageous arrangement at Shea

Stadium in Queens—where they toiled under the thumb of Major League Baseball's Mets—never really got to feel that they were in their element, never truly knew what it meant to play a home game. After several aborted attempts at getting their own digs—including the ill-fated West Side Stadium project—the Jets and the Giants came to an understanding. The two teams would join forces and build the best stadium in the league right there in the Meadowlands, a stadium that would meet their needs equally and put New York City—or rather, East Rutherford—in the running to host the Super Bowl.

National design practice Ewing Cole got the job of turning out a professional football venue—neutrally dubbed the New Meadowlands Stadium—that would embody the distinct personalities of both franchises. It was not an easy task. The

teams had very different ideas about how a stadium should look and feel. The Giants, with their roots in the halcyon days of the leather helmet, favored a traditional aesthetic of exposed steel framework and muscular rusticated stone. The Jets, children of the go-go aerospace 1960s, rooted for a sleek metal-and-glass modernism. Ewing Cole gave them both. Referring to the column/tower dynamic of many of Manhattan's skyscrapers, the base of the stadium's facade is clad in heavy stonework up to about 20 feet above grade. From there, up to just below the apex of the seating bowl, a system of aluminum louvers and glass takes over.

While this may seem a jarring transition, the light gray color of the stone blends closely with the anodized aluminum louvers and establishes the neutral palette of the interior. The walls, the floors, the ceilings, and the seating are all gray. The transition between each team's home games is handled through the use of some 4,000 square feet of LED displays and a color-changing lighting control system, which can personalize the stadium for the Jets or Giants—green or red and blue—at the push of a button. This change will be most apparent on the exterior, where colored light will wash the facade in each team's color from Sunday to Sunday. The field is similarly easy to switch. In the old venue, the end zones had to be repainted with each team's logo before a game. Here, the artificial turf field features palletized end zones, which can be lifted out and swapped with a minimum of hassle. The entire transformation can be effected in 24 hours, a vast improvement over the former field, which took a week to prepare.

With 82,500 seats, the new stadium

Clockwise from top left: At the New Meadowlands, the seating bowl rings the entire stadium; a section showing aluminum louvers as lightshades and cladding; one of the 20 luxury suites.

does not vastly expand in capacity. It is, however, a much larger building—2.1 million square feet vs. the old 900,000. Most of this extra space is devoted to wider concourses for more concessions, a total of four locker rooms—one for each home team and two for visitors—and, most notably, 200 luxury suites arranged in three tiers at the sidelines. The average fan has it better, too. Four massive scoreboards, each measuring 30 feet high by 118 feet long, occupy the corners of the bowl, ensuring that no one will miss the slow-motion crunch of an instant replay.

On one aspect both teams agreed: the need to impress upon visitors that they are in New York. There was also the desire to create the best sightlines in the business, allowing every fan to see the full arc of a 90-foot punt. Accommodating these requests required compromise. The bowl had to be raked back a bit to eliminate overhangs from the upper decks that would impede views. However, as in the old stadium, the seating bowl rings the entire stadium without a break. Many football stadiums feature open corners to allow views to skylines, a civic-minded gesture that dissipates the sounds of the crowd. At New Meadowlands this noise is very much bottled up, allowing a real big-city uproar to accumulate and let the visiting team know what they're up against.

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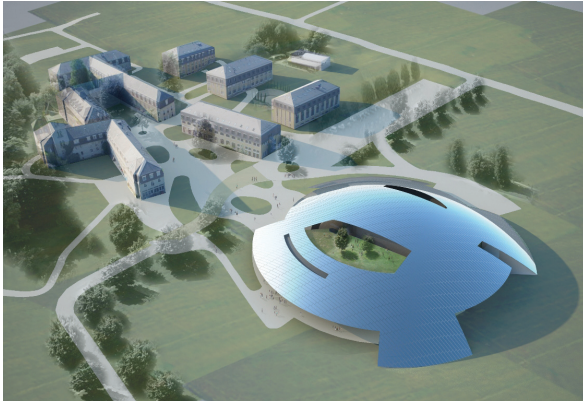
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COURTESY BERNARD TSCHUMI ARCHITECTS

UNVEILED

CARNAL HALL

New York and Paris-based Bernard Tschumi Architects recently unveiled their competition-winning design for a new performing arts center that will bring a stainless-steel dome to Le Rosey, a Swiss boarding school on the shores of Lake Geneva. The new building, to be named Carnal Hall after

school founder Paul Carnal, includes an 800-seat concert hall along with smaller performance spaces, classrooms, a library, and various student amenities.

According to Bernard Tschumi, the building's many functions called for a departure from Le Rosey's traditional architecture. "You couldn't really fit the project into the same typology of classroom buildings," he said. Although the signature

dome will contrast sharply with the campus aesthetic, the clients embraced the design, according to Tschumi, who worked to ensure that the building would not upstage its surroundings. "I wanted the building to have a relatively regular geometry to contrast with the existing buildings, but not compete with them," he said.

The dome will be slightly detached from the ground, giving the impression that it hovers, and a terrace with lakeside views will be cut into its apex. The dome's striking form also acts as a thermal shield in the cold climate, reducing energy consumption and sheltering glazed areas from ice and snow. **KATHERINE LINDSTEDT**

Architect:

Bernard Tschumi Architects

Client:

Le Rosey

Location:

Rolle, Switzerland

Completion:

TBA

The Reading Company Grain elevator.



COURTESY SMALLBONES

very little future if you can't change it, in our opinion," Phillips said.

The plan he put forth earlier this year would have had retail, restaurants, and a lobby on the first two floors, silos occupying the equivalent of floors three through eight, and twelve stories of condominiums above that, which ISA had been considering building out of prefabricated metal steel boxes. A green-wall "wrapper" would have run up the side of the granary, cradled the middle penthouse level, and then continued up the opposite side of the building to hold the modular box apartments, tying the old and new together.

The silos themselves would have been put to environmental and recreational ends, Phillips said. One silo alone would have been enough to store rainwater for a year. Other silos in the interior of the building, insulated from the outside, would have been used to create a geothermal system to funnel the soil's cool temperatures upward in summer, and heat the structure in winter. Another silo, positioned above the second-floor fitness center, would have been opened up from below so that people could scale it as a climbing wall.

But ISA's ambitious proposal was panned by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and by preservationists such as the Preservation Alliance, who saw the plan as hostile to an important piece of Philadelphia's industrial heritage. "Our reaction when he showed us the proposal was extremely negative," said John Gallory, president of the Preservation Alliance.

Pearl Properties president Jim Pearlstein, who did not respond to requests for comment, is now planning a minor renovation that preserves the essential structure of the granary as-is. He has dropped ISA from the project, according to the architects, and will be hiring another firm to design condominiums on a lot adjacent to the granary.

"We're very pleased they abandoned the proposal," Gallory said. "This is a rare example of a developer being sensitive to the community's wishes." **JG**

SILO SAVED? continued from front page

from community and preservation groups last month and ditched an eye-popping plan to turn the Reading Company Grain Elevator in Center City into a mixed-use development.

The fortress-like concrete structure on the corner of 20th and Callowhill streets was built by the Reading Railroad in 1925, replacing an older wooden granary that had burned down on the same site. After going out of commission in 1950, it stood empty until an interior designer built penthouse offices above it in the 1970s, and in 1982 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Pearl Properties hired local Interface Studio Architects to renovate the granary in 2007 and find a way to adapt it as a mixed-use development that would join a wave of new projects in the surrounding neighborhood. The building posed an exciting challenge for Brian Phillips, founding partner of ISA. The first two floors and a penthouse level are separated by a grid of 72 six-story grain silos, making 80 percent of the structure uninhabitable. "A building like this has



Marshak gets a new skin.

COURTESY RSD ENGINEERING

SCIENCE EXPERIMENT continued from front page glass curtain wall courtesy of Ahuja Partnership Architects and RSD Engineering. Meanwhile, a clutch of new research facilities by Flad and Associates, including the CCNY Advanced Science Research Center, are in the works for the school's expanded South Campus in Hamilton Heights.

The Marshak curtain wall is 90 percent in place, said Raj Ahuja, the firm's principal. Ahuja Partnership was originally hired ten years ago to repair shoddy concrete panels, some of which actually fell from the building in 2005. The original concrete, though common at the time of construction, has proven unsuitable for East Coast weather, said Ajay Ghei, an associate at Ahuja Partnership and project manager for the Marshak Building. In some instances, panels were only held in place by glue.

By 2007, the repair work had evolved into a \$45 million renovation, including plans for the new facade, the only way to avoid continual concrete repairs. "The new curtain wall has been designed to be the only wall," Ghei said. This means that upon completion, the new wall, attached to the original by

means of metal tubing, will insulate the entire building and protect the remaining substandard concrete, still a major liability. Thanks to this foresight, the wall, which also integrates aluminum panels on the north and south elevations, will allow for the eventual removal of the original single-pane windows, freeing space for new HVAC units.

These changes come in the midst of CUNY's "Decade of Science," a refocusing of university funds and attention on research and development in advanced math and science. Though the Marshak Building opened four decades ago, City College spokesman Ellis Simon said that it has remained the sole science building on campus despite a recent explosion of research activity.

In order to accommodate this new emphasis on research, CUNY has initiated a number of projects. These include construction of two graduate research laboratories, as well as a new City College Advanced Science Research Center, all commissioned as a single project from Flad and Associates. The Advanced Science Research Center is intended to help alleviate demand on the Marshak Building, which also houses the Nat Holman Gymnasium and the Jeremiah Mahoney Pool.

The new science buildings will join the School of Architecture, Urban Design and Landscape Architecture, recently remodeled by Rafael Viñoly Architects, on CCNY's ever-expanding South Campus.

The Marshak Building, which will also undergo a series of interior laboratory renovations, will remain open throughout the exterior construction phase scheduled for completion this fall.

ROBERT E. THOMAS

AT DEADLINE

SUPERFUND FOR NEWTOWN CREEK

Newtown Creek, the abominably polluted, 4-mile-long branch of the East River, has become the second New York City waterway to earn the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund designation, reserved for the most polluted sites in the country. The Superfund status, announced on September 27 by E.P.A. regional administrator Judith Enck, earns the creek a thorough evaluation from the agency and a federally-funded cleanup of the many pesticides, metals, and oils that have collected in its waters over the years from nearby factories. The Bloomberg administration, in a reversal from its staunch opposition to Superfund status for Brooklyn's Gowanus Canal, supported the Newtown Creek designation, noting that it had proposed no alternative plan for the creek and believed the federal cleanup to be the best solution.

SUBWAY STALL-OUT ON 2ND AVE.

The ever-elusive 2nd Avenue subway dream got deferred once again last month. On September 25, State Representative Carolyn Maloney reported that numbers from the Federal Transit Administration predict that the subway line's first phase, which will run along 2nd Avenue between 96th and 63rd streets, is now two years behind its latest estimated completion date of 2016. It's also running an estimated \$420 million over the \$4.5 billion that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority had budgeted for Phase One, according to the *New York Post*. Still, Maloney gave the project a B in her second annual report card for the project, citing "real progress" over the past year that deserved a bump up from last year's grade of B-minus.

FIELD OPERATIONS STORMS SEATTLE

James Corner Field Operations has scored the much-coveted commission to redesign some 9 acres of public space in Seattle that will be newly created when the city's elevated highway, known as the Alaskan Way Viaduct, is demolished over the coming six years and replaced by a \$3 billion highway tunnel and a surface boulevard. The landscape architecture firm is heading a multidisciplinary project team including SHoP Architects, Fluidity, and HR&A Advisors, along with local firms Mithun, The Berger Partnership, Herrera Environmental Consultants, and Jason Toft. In winning the \$6 million, two-year contract, awarded on September 21, Field Operations prevailed over three other finalist teams, including those led by Wallace Roberts & Todd, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, and Gustafson Guthrie Nichol. Construction is expected to be complete by 2018. The project extends Field Operations' West Coast winning streak, having won Santa Monica's 7-acre Town Square in February.



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2 **SCOPE**
SIEDLE

The Siedle Scope is a new hands-free indoor video station and landline video-conferencing telephone in one. The cordless device gives the user a live update of visitors at the door, allowing them to grant access with a door-release button. When combined with the new Siedle Access IP system, to be released in late 2011, users will have more control over greater distances and for larger numbers of participants. www.siedle.com

3 **SYSTEM 100 ELOCK**
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Hewi's eLOCK framed door system is a battery-operated tubular frame mortise lock, equipped with a control unit and an antenna controlled by classic wall scanner applications or by biometric systems for high-security areas. The modular system can be combined with Hewi lever handles and includes a range of offline and online programming options that can be upgraded at any time with no change to the hardware. www.hewi.com

4 **ALPHA COMMUNICATIONS**
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The new AlphaEntry v3.0 is a PC-based entry intercom system that allows building visitors to locate their desired contact via a digital touch-screen podium. With multilingual voice prompts and links to iPhones, mailrooms, building cameras, and IM systems, the platform can be programmed for visitors or staff of apartment buildings, offices, industrial complexes, or hospitals. www.alphaentry.com

5 **SPEEDLANE 2048**
BOON EDAM

Boon Edam recently announced the worldwide launch of its Speedlane 2048 optical turnstile, a multi-beam detection system that creates an invisible security barrier between units. The ADA-compliant design allows up to 35 people to pass through the barrier per minute, incorporating an LCD-user instruction screen and audible and visible alarms to indicate unauthorized access. www.boonedam.us



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www.italiantiles.com
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Japanese engineers Transsolar and Tetsu Kondo Architects collaborated on two metal ramps that disappear into mist.

Below: Architect Junya Ishigami's *Architecture as Air: Study for Chateau La Coste*, a 3-D sketch in thread, existed for barely a day before a cat destroyed it.

MARCO ZANTA

AMID EXPANSIVE DISPLAYS OF DERRING-DO AND CLEVER ACTS OF INTERPRETATION AT THIS YEAR'S 12TH INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION, A SILENT QUESTION HANGS IN THE AIR: IS THIS REALLY WHAT ARCHITECTURE MEANS? BY WILLIAM MENKING

"People meet in architecture"—the theme of this year's Venice Architecture Biennale—is perhaps a too-literal translation from Japanese into English. Put forward by exhibition director Kazuyo Sejima, the idea is to "provide a greater connection between the viewer and the exhibition itself." The emphasis here is clearly on experience rather than exchange. "You can see nice photographs of models on the Internet," Sejima said. "At the Biennale,

you should be able to see the real thing." Of course, the real thing is always a question in any exhibition on architecture, and Sejima seems to have strong ideas about that in guiding her choices for this year's show.

For this Biennale, open through November 21, Sejima selected 47 practices (only two are American) and gave each its own space and the power, she said, to be "his or her own curator." One feels Sejima's knowing design hand

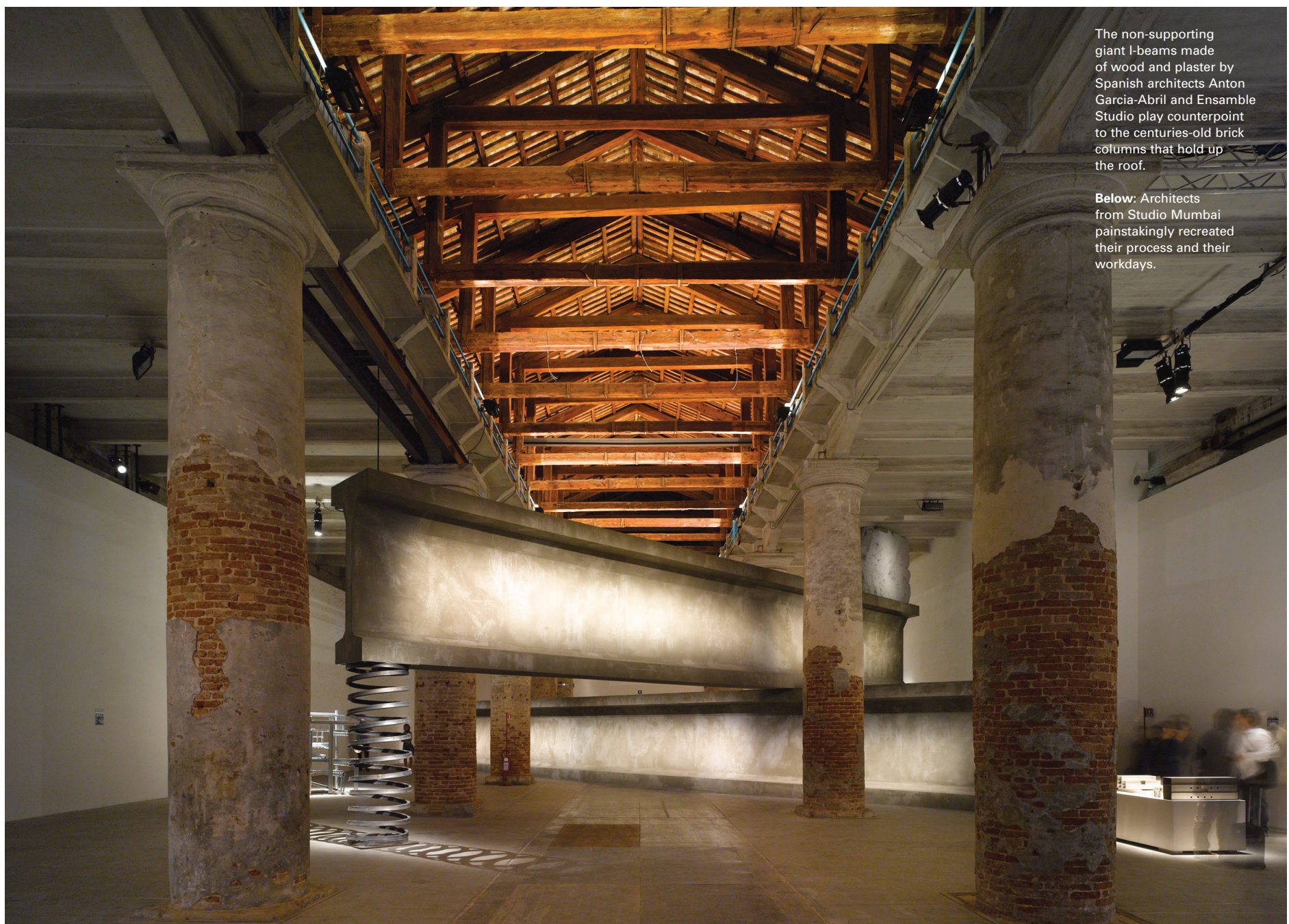
in the selection process, which introduces several relatively new voices to this most important international stage. It is also clear from the clever curatorial ebb and flow of the various installation placements in the two main Biennale venues—the Arsenale and the Palazzo delle Esposizioni—that she carefully considered which architects would be placed next to each other. It was Sejima's intention in the show, she said, that it be a "chance for less information and more feeling."

Mirko Zardini, director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, believes that Sejima's Biennale introduces a new approach to architecture, one that focuses not on style but on "the atmosphere and the character of things," and that it emphasizes ambience and space in a way that puts "experience at the front of design."

This is probably true, and points to the limitations of Sejima's stance, as most of the architects she selected focused on formal concerns with little relation to the messy urban problems out of which architecture most often emerges. The 17 projects in the vast Arsenale—admittedly a difficult space to exhibit, given its spectacular physicality and history as a workshop for the entire 12th-century Venetian fleet—simply placed their installations in the center of rooms and lit them dramatically from above. The very first space in the Arsenale featuring Chilean architects Smiljan Radic and Marcela Correa's large round stone pierced by wood and metal, called *Boy Hidden in a Fish*, pursued exactly this strategy. In the Biennale catalog, the architects claim it was created in response to the "recent earthquake in Chile and is proposed



COURTESY CONTESSONALLY



The non-supporting giant I-beams made of wood and plaster by Spanish architects Anton Garcia-Abril and Ensamble Studio play counterpoint to the centuries-old brick columns that hold up the roof.

Below: Architects from Studio Mumbai painstakingly recreated their process and their workdays.

ROLAND HALBE

as a prototype for an idealistic social space in the future.” I’ll have to take their word for it, but viewed in the Arsenale, the object is still an isolated sculptural monument that references only forms and leaves us questioning its connection to the earthquake. Even by the standards of current art biennales, this project would be viewed as formalist and disconnected from any larger cultural discourse.

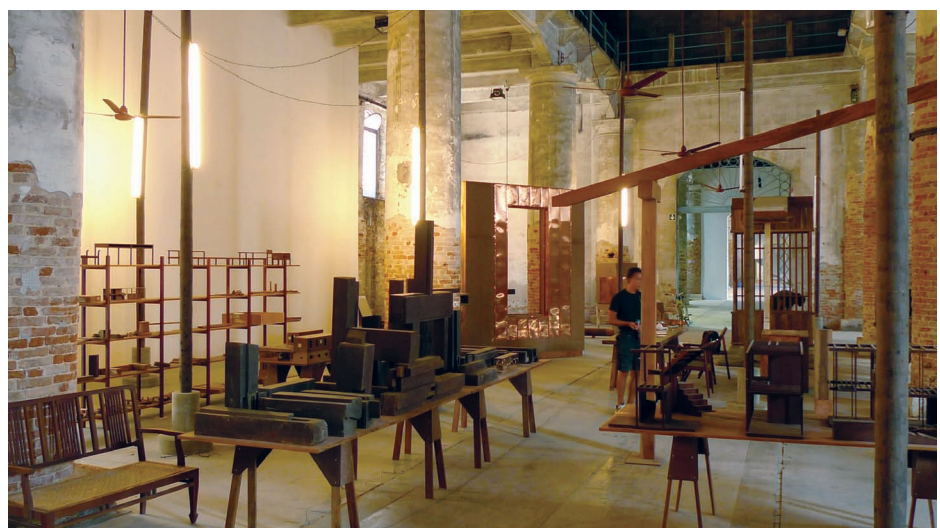
This was also the case for the Japanese engineers Transsolar, collaborating with Tetsu Kondo Architects on the beautiful installation *Cloudscapes*, where two metal ramps swoop up and through a room of mist that hangs suspended in the space. Though calibrated to the dimensions of the Arsenale, the project is still missing a larger connection to an urban problem that one expects from architecture. *Cloudscapes*

encourages us to experience its soft and tactile ambience, which, while pleasurable, makes us wonder where it moves the debate on architecture. The obvious expense of this project also forces us to question whether architecture is to be found only in luxurious commissions that appeal to the senses. I am not arguing, as some do, that architecture must always solve a societal issue, or that exhibitions should focus on buildings, or that personal experience is not important in architecture. But unless architectural solutions arise out of real-world problems and issues, how does it differ from art?

Further along in the Arsenale, Studio Mumbai’s installation *work-place* (winner of a Golden Lion Special Mention Award) describes the group’s daily working method through the presentation of models, material samples,

and so on. It is studied in its careful placement of beautiful objects, but by its focus on process, it begins to make connections between designing and solving problems—the defining work of architecture.

The projects Sejima placed in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni (formerly the Italian Pavilion) do include some formally inventive and compelling installations, offering the kind of relationship to working methods, research, and design process that mark architecture as different from art or design. In an exhibition of his firm’s work, Rem Koolhaas, who was given the Golden Lion Lifetime Achievement Award (along with the late Kazuo Shinohara), provided a dense critique of historic preservation and what it means when, as he said, “4 percent of the world’s surface now cannot be touched and the time lag



COURTESY STUDIO MUMBAI ARCHITECTS

between construction and preservation becomes even smaller,” concluding that “our ability to inhabit architecture declines.”

Koolhaas, though he is a brilliant formal inventor, always connects his forms to the city, proving why he

remains the most compelling figure of his generation. (Unfortunately, he is still also a terrible role model for headstrong young male professionals coming out of his office.) But he deserves this award. After all, making connections to the surround-

ing world moves architecture beyond simple formalism to become what makes it distinctive as a shaper of the built world.

WILLIAM MENKING IS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER.



ZELIMIR GRZANIC

Clockwise from top: The latest arrival was the Croatia Pavilion—a floating cloud of rusty rebar—that tried to dock at the Giardini but without the proper paperwork was forced to sail up the Canal, and never landed.

The forest of laser-cut plastic lace at the Canada Pavilion created by architect Philip Beesley wavered and moved in response to body heat.

The architects from Raumlabor Berlin were commissioned by Sejima to create an outdoor installation for the Giardini. They responded by making wooden chairs that could be stacked in any configuration, including a wall. People were allowed to take the chairs home.

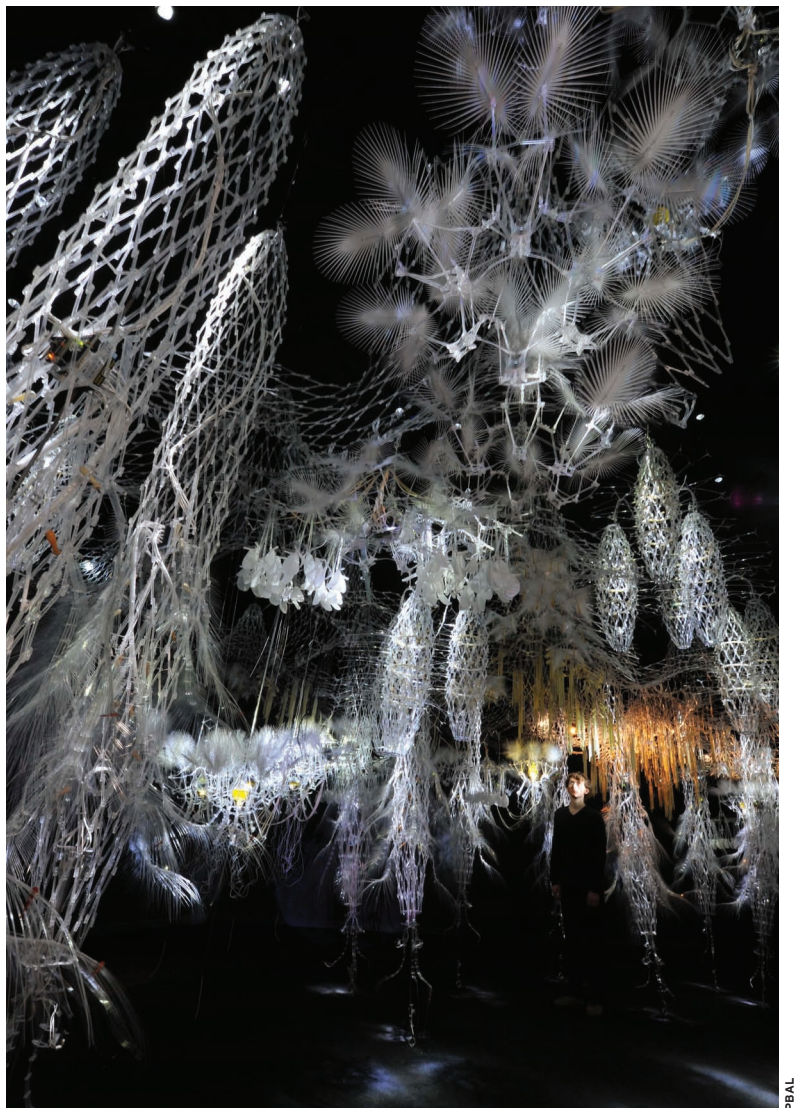
The golden-hued installation at the Egypt Pavilion appeared to be a CNC-milled sculpture made of brass, but was actually cut entirely by hand with a large pair of scissors.



COURTESY MA STUDIO



COURTESY RAUMLABOR BERLIN



PBAL



CHRISTIAN RICHTERS



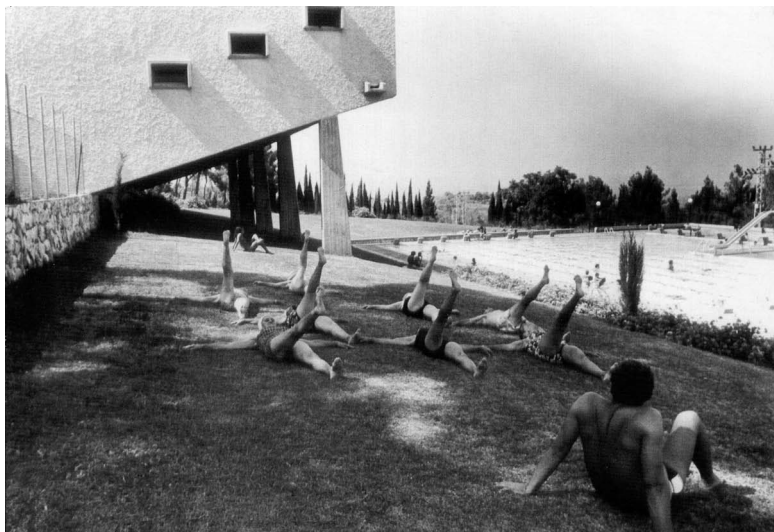
COURTESY JOHN PORTMAN & ASSOCIATES



COURTESY ANDREA BRANZI



MACIEW LANDSBERG



COURTESY ISRAEL PAVILION

Top, left: The Bahrain exhibition, which won the Golden Lion for Best National Pavilion, featured a room full of reconstructed shacks made out of scavenged wood that are typically found on waterfronts and used as social gathering spaces.

Top, right: Atlanta architect John Portman's Peachtree Plaza was featured along with 16 other installations about collaborative public-private projects at the U.S. Pavilion.

Far left: Theoretician and architect Andrea Branzi put an updated spin on his ideas about commodification and the city in *Object City*.

Left: The Polish Pavilion installation, called *Emergency Exit*, was built out of a mountain of wire chicken coops from which visitors were encouraged to jump into a cloud of fog. Many lined up to do so.

Below, left: The Israel Pavilion curators showed a collection of vintage 1940s photographs of kibbutzim revealing the modern style being cultivated by the young socialist state.



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OCTOBER

WEDNESDAY 6

LECTURES

Marian Feldman

The Materiality of Style: The Case of Ivories from Early 1st Millennium BCE Syria
6:00 p.m.
Bard Graduate Center
Lecture Hall
38 West 86th St.
www.bgc.bard.edu

Monica Ponce de Leon

Approximations

6:30 p.m.
Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

Adam Fuss

7:00 p.m.
International Center of
Photography
1114 Avenue of the Americas
www.icp.org

SYMPOSIUM

Innovation 2010:

**Big and Super-Green:
From Buildings to Cityscapes**
8:00 a.m.
McGraw-Hill Auditorium
1221 Avenue of the Americas
construction.com/events/
innovation2010

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Man, Myth, and Sensual
Pleasures: Jan Gossart's
Renaissance**
Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 5th Ave.
www.metmuseum.org

Dieter Roth and Bjorn Roth

Work Tables & Tischmatten
Hauser & Wirth
32 East 69th St.
www.hauserwirth.com

THURSDAY 7

LECTURES

Lori Grinker

**Afterwar: Veterans from a
World in Conflict**
6:30 p.m.
The Morgan Library and
Museum
225 Madison Ave.
www.themorgan.org

Robert Pincus-Witten,

Barbara Jakobson, et al.

Leo Castelli and His Circle

6:30 p.m.
The Jewish Museum
1109 5th Ave.
www.thejewishmuseum.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

Tony Oursler

Peak
Lehmann Maupin
201 Chrystie St.
www.lehmannmaupin.com

Liz Cohen

Trabantimino

Salon 94
243 Bowery
www.salon94.com

Francois Bard

Axelle Fine Arts
535 West 25th St.
www.axelle.com

Mayumi Lake

Miyako Yoshinaga Art
Prospects
547 West 27th St.
www.miyartprospects.com

EVENTS

Heritage Ball 2010

6:00 p.m.
Pier 60, Chelsea Piers
www.aiany.org

ADC Young Guns 8

Exhibition and Opening Party

7:00 p.m.
ADC Gallery
106 West 29th St.
www.adcglobal.org

FRIDAY 8

LECTURE

Maxim Trudolyubov

Are Icons Relevant Today?

7:00 p.m.
Rubin Museum of Art
150 West 17th St.
www.rmanyc.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

Chino Amobi

Pregnancy Pact

Like the Spice Gallery
224 Roebling St., Brooklyn
www.likethespice.com

Alicia McCarthy

Jack Hanley Gallery
136 Watts St.
www.jackhanley.com

Fred Tomaselli

Brooklyn Museum of Art
200 Eastern Pkwy., Brooklyn
www.brooklynmuseum.org

SATURDAY 9

LECTURE

Douglas Balder and

Carrie Lobman

**Design, Architecture
& Social Change**

4:15 p.m.
East Side Institute
920 Broadway
www.eastsideinstitute.org

EVENTS

Festival of the

Building Arts 2010

National Building Museum
10:00 a.m.
401 F St. NW
Washington, D.C.
www.nbm.org

Conflux Festival

12:00 p.m.
NYU Barney Building
34 Stuyvesant St.
confluxfestival.org

SUNDAY 10

LECTURE

Richard Brettell

**The Greatest Unknown Work
of Art in America**

2:00 p.m.
National Gallery of Art
National Mall and 3rd St.
Washington, D.C.
www.nga.gov

EVENT

Jane Jacobs Tour: Her Village

11:00 a.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
www.mas.org

MONDAY 11

LECTURES

Nanette Salomon

Impressionism and the

Moment of Modernism:

Women, Jews, and Other

"Others"

11:30 a.m.
The Jewish Museum
1109 5th Ave.
www.thejewishmuseum.org

Andrew Freear

and Andres Lepik

Small Scale, Big Change

6:30 p.m.
Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

TUESDAY 12

LECTURES

Sebastien Marot

Palimpsestuous Ithaca:

**A Relative Manifesto for
Sub-Urbanism**

6:30 p.m.
Harvard Graduate School of
Design
48 Quincy St., Cambridge
www.gsd.harvard.edu

Simone Legno and

Matthew Waldman

The J-Pop Influence:

A Western Obsession

6:30 p.m.
Japan Society
333 East 47th St.
www.japansociety.org

Peter Eisenman

Lateness and the

Politics of Media

6:30 p.m.
Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum
1071 5th Ave.
www.guggenheim.org

EXHIBITION OPENING

Think Again: New Latin

American Jewelry

Museum of Arts and Design
2 Columbus Circle
www.madmuseum.org

THURSDAY 14

LECTURES

Constance Haydock

Edith Wharton and the

Villas of Rome

12:00 p.m.
Horticultural Society of
New York
148 West 37th St.
www.hsn.org

Checkerboard Conversations:

Studio Gang Architects

6:30 p.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
www.aiany.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

Javier Pinon

ZieherSmith
516 West 20th St.
www.zieher smith.com

Greg Haberny

Define Nothing and

Defy Everything

Christina Ray
30 Grand St.
www.christinaray.com

Gregory Amenoff

At All Hours: New Paintings

Alexandre Gallery
41 East 57th St.
alexandregallery.com

FRIDAY 15

LECTURE

Jacob Albert

and John Tittman

Rule and Invention:

A 21st Century Practice

6:30 p.m.
Institute of Classical
Architecture & Classical
America
20 West 44th St.
www.classicist.org

EXHIBITION OPENING

Seductive Subversion:

Women Pop Artists,

1958–1968

Brooklyn Museum of Art
200 Eastern Pkwy., Brooklyn
www.brooklynmuseum.org

SATURDAY 16

SYMPOsia

Preservation and

Climate Change

9:00 a.m.
Columbia GSAPP
Wood Auditorium
Avery Hall
www.arch.columbia.edu

Design Like You

Give a Damn: LIVE!

12:00 p.m.
Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Pl.
www.aiany.org

EVENT

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and

the Immigrants of East

Harlem Walking Tour

11:00 a.m.
Our Lady of
Mt. Carmel Church
448 East 116th St.
www.nyhistory.org

SUNDAY 17

LECTURE

Dimitrios Pandermalis

The New Acropolis Museum

2:00 p.m.
National Gallery of Art
National Mall and 3rd St.
Washington, D.C.
www.nga.gov

WITH THE KIDS

Art Workshop:

Sculptural Creatures for

Frank Gehry

10:30 a.m.
The Jewish Museum
1109 5th Ave.
www.thejewishmuseum.org

MONDAY 18

LECTURE

Kristel Smentek

Ottoman

Encounters/Enlightenment

Theories: Art, Architecture,

and Intercultural

Communication in

the 18th Century

6:00 p.m.
Harvard Graduate School of
Design
48 Quincy St., Cambridge
www.gsd.harvard.edu

SYMPOSIUM

Daniel Patrick Moynihan:

A Portrait in Letters of an

American Visionary

5:30 p.m.
Museum of the City of
New York
1220 5th Ave.
www.mcny.org

TUESDAY 19

LECTURE

Peter Bohlin

6:30 p.m.
National Building Museum
401 F St. NW
Washington, D.C.
www.nbm.org

EXHIBITION OPENING

The Artistic Furniture of

Charles Rohlf

Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 5th Ave.
www.metmuseum.org

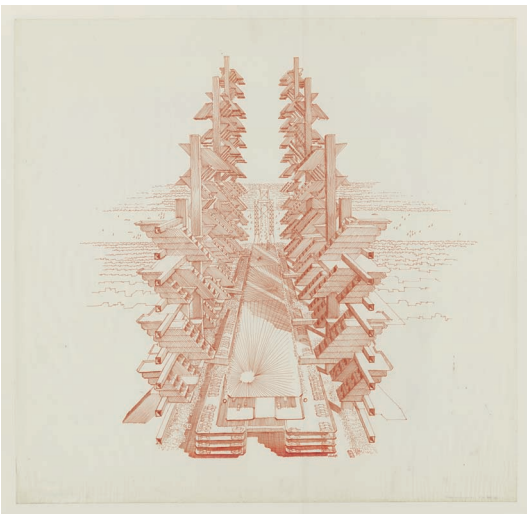


COURTESY GAGOSIAN GALLERY

MARC NEWSON: TRANSPORT

Gagosian Gallery
522 West 21st Street
Through October 16

The prolific industrial designer Marc Newson has crafted everything from a mass-marketed Vidal Sassoon hair dryer to the honeycombed interior of New York's Casa Lever restaurant to a concept car for Ford. His new show allows the audience to see what Newson's transportation designs—some commissioned, some created purely for pleasure—look like in real life: Instead of offering mere photographs of these large-scale works, the Gagosian Gallery is displaying several actual vehicles. Among these marvels is the *Kelvin 40* (2004, above), a biomorphic, single-engine jet prototype commissioned by the Fondation Cartier that fulfilled Newson's childhood fantasy of designing a jet. The show also marks the debut of *Aquariva by Marc Newson*, which is the artist's reinterpretation of the iconic Italian speedboat line. In addition to brighter, more modern upholstery, the 22 limited-edition crafts replace traditional mahogany with phenolic textile composite, a durable laminate made from linen and resin that Newson has been using in his furniture designs since 2007.



COURTESY PAUL RUDOLPH ARCHIVE/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

PAUL RUDOLPH: LOWER MANHATTAN EXPRESSWAY

Arthur A. Houghton Jr. Gallery at The Cooper Union
7 East 7th Street
Through November 14

In the 1930s, a highway was planned that would slice through Lower Manhattan, linking the Holland Tunnel to the Williamsburg and Manhattan bridges. One of the last large-scale initiatives of the Robert Moses era, the Lower Manhattan Expressway never came to be, but a new show offers a glimpse of the megahighway that nearly remade New York. Organized with the Drawing Center, the exhibition features full-scale reproductions of Paul Rudolph's detailed drawings, prints, and photographs, created after the Ford Foundation commissioned a study of the project in 1967. A modernist who studied under Walter Gropius at Harvard, Rudolph saw the expressway as the spine of a dynamic urban network connecting subways, apartments, parking lots, and public spaces. His proposal is supplemented by an elaborately reconstructed model created by Cooper Union architecture students. But more than anything, Rudolph's skill as a draftsman, seen in his rendering of multi-layered housing on the Williamsburg Bridge approach (1970, above), brings this audacious urban vision to life.



EZRA STOLLER/ESTO

The D/R store in Cambridge featured an open-book display for the Boston neighborhood.

ture critic Paul Goldberger outlines this accomplishment in his afterword.

Rob Forbes, founder of Design Within Reach, perhaps the most famous recent domestic design emporium, writes a foreword that discusses his own debt to Thompson and D/R. In between the two essays, Jane Thompson and her coauthor, architecture and design journalist Alexandra Lange, have built a structure for the book as transparent yet nuanced as Thompson's own concrete masterpiece of a building for D/R in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In some ways, it is a tragic narrative about a creative man, his vision, his success, his zenith, his loss, and his legacy—one that is told, oddly enough, through the lens of a small chain of cutting-edge design stores.

The authors quote Thompson's unpublished memoirs throughout, yet they also went to a lot of trouble to find several former D/R employees (including the late *New York Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp) and weave their viewpoints into an ongoing oral history that peppers the more formal essays. (Speaking of pepper, it was Thompson who brought us those great Peugeot pepper mills.) This parallels the way Thompson worked, asking the staff for their input and giving them a strong voice in the store's look and direction. There are also reproductions of significant articles about D/R, including

Retail Love Affair

*Design Research:
The Store That Brought Modern Living to American Homes*
Jane Thompson and Alexandra Lange
Chronicle Books
\$50.00

The name of the store, Design Research, suggested that the project was vast. By its very nature, design is a never-ending process of inquiry. Like

most large ideas, the name got condensed to something bite-sized: D/R.

This new book is about architect Ben Thompson as

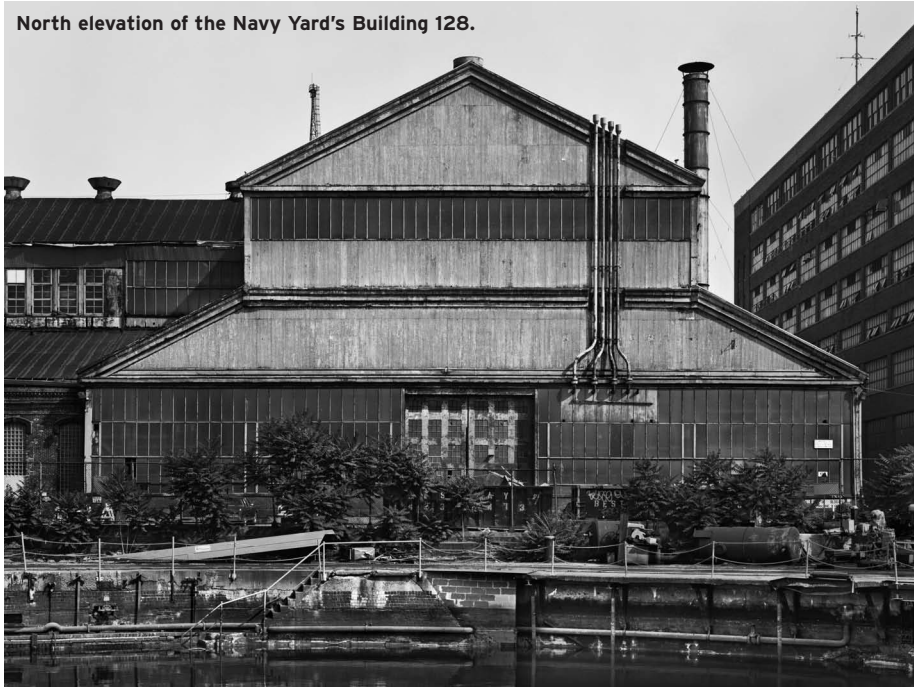
much as the store he created. Call it Big Ben, Part 1. One of the authors of this volume, his widow Jane Thompson, is at work on a memoir, Big Ben, Part 2. Thompson is one of those architects that mostly only other architects know about, but his impact went far beyond the converted.

Thompson's early houses and academic buildings in the 1940s followed the quiet modernist lead of his partner at The Architects'

Collaborative, Walter Gropius. Thompson didn't produce his most significant architectural work until he struck out on his own in the 1960s, integrating retail into the fabric of the city. He did this most famously at Faneuil Hall in Boston, South Street Seaport in Manhattan, and Harborplace in Boston. His abilities in this area no doubt grew in part because of his hands-on retail experience at D/R, which he founded in 1953.

Design Research educated generations of Marimekko-loving modernists who would go on to shop at Design Within Reach, Crate & Barrel, Pottery Barn, and Conran, as well as at smaller modernist shops across the country. Even the D/R price tags would inform the shopper of the item's design provenance. Thompson created some great shops, but more profoundly, he also changed the culture. *New Yorker* architec-

North elevation of the Navy Yard's Building 128.



JOHN BARTELSTONE

CAMERA OBSCURA

The Brooklyn Navy Yard
John Bartelstone
Powerhouse Books, \$50.00

Newtown Creek
Anthony Hamboussi
Princeton Architectural Press, \$55.00

Photographic projects dedicated to urban ruin and dereliction have become quite common, and offer timely metaphors for America's current difficulties. Yet photographers who use their craft can still attempt nuanced articulations by entering into sustained dialogues with the worlds they encounter.

Presented here are two such books that speak to Brooklyn's industrial present and offer distinct readings of their respective spaces.

The Brooklyn Navy Yard consists of 80 richly printed, black-and-white images portraying Brooklyn's famous waterfront complex. Each image is beautifully prepared: The highlights are delicate and controlled, midtones luminous, shadows deep and sensual. Photographic craft dominates the publication.

The 250-acre yard is compressed into sensibly conceived chapters of industrial buildings, docks, infrastructure, the hospital, and officers' housing. In each section of the book, Bartelstone capitalizes on the site's dramatic potential: Images

of electronic testing facilities evince fallen modern industry, while empty dry docks persist as hollow monuments to an "industrial sublime." Throughout, images exploit the descriptive ability of the large-format camera—its sheer power to carry detail—and fill every square inch with handsomely toned, seductive texture. Indeed, the relentlessly formal intensity of Bartelstone's images is overwhelming, and nearly buries the living dockyard.

The author's aesthetic—in choosing what to represent as much as how to represent it—seems to suggest that this is a project about a space in use. Bartelstone takes care to point out in the introduction and captions that the docks are not **continued on page 25**

Janet Malcolm's fine essay from the November 7, 1970, issue of *The New Yorker*.

The book reproduces the excellent professional photos of the stores on Brattle Street in Cambridge, but there are few professional shots of the other locations. To compensate for this, the graphic designers at Pentagram use a lot of yellow type, yellow pages, and white space. Other than the hairstyles and automobiles in the photos, the layout of the book and the designs contained within are perfectly matched and timeless, which speaks to Thompson's prescience.

Of course, it wasn't just his good taste that made the store bloom so brightly. Thompson had a few lucky breaks, like Jackie Kennedy sporting a Marimekko dress on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* and Julia Child asking the store for help with cookware and set design when she launched her cooking show. Media helps. But as the book points out, Thompson hired talented people and let them fulfill his vision. The authors are to be commended for allowing some of the negative aspects to be told, like other more outmoded hiring policies that Thompson employed. It's part of the history.

In his own retail environment, Thompson was able to create

a complete environment where interiors and architecture could come together, and it lasted a quarter of a century. His genius was for creating the armature for all kinds of creative reinvention, whether it was as chairman of Harvard's Department of Architecture, as the father of festival retail, or as the creator of Design Research.

A key part of the history is tucked away on the last page of the book, before the list of contributors, telling of the chain's demise. The opening of Thompson's great architectural achievement at 48 Brattle Street in 1969 took place under a cloud of litigation that resulted from a hostile takeover. No doubt there is a larger tale yet to be told. Can a business that prioritizes a creative vision of excellence over quarterly earnings survive? Or are all businesses now short-lived until the next takeover and eventual bankruptcy? That isn't the tale of this volume. But perhaps Jane Thompson's memoirs will tell us more about how her husband created a successful business where design came first. One former employee told me that the book should have been titled "D/R: A Love Story." You can feel the love on every page.

KENNETH CALDWELL IS A WRITER AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT BASED IN SAN FRANCISCO.



CAMERA OBSCURA continued from page 24 abandoned, noting that the yard now employs 5,000 people (up from 3,500 in 1994, when he began the project), and mentioning its increasing use by the Steiner film studio and others. But even as the photographs draw our attention to the occasional worker or ship under repair, the predominance of the ruinous misdirects us. Photogenic decay, pathos, and nostalgia trump change or reuse. The present yard is seen almost in spite of the photographs, and the project's confusion undermines the care that has been paid to the individual images.

It is against this at times beautiful but stifling project that the quiet poetry of a seemingly more prosaic book deserves attention. Anthony Hamboussi's *Newtown Creek* presents a six-year survey of the waterway and environs that function, in part, to separate Queens from Brooklyn, but mostly serves as "New York's backyard." Like *The Brooklyn Navy Yard*, the book considers the changing industrial

English Kills from Metropolitan Avenue, East Williamsburg.

landscape of New York, but reserves more empathy for its subject.

Hamboussi approaches *Newtown Creek* through a number of restricted decisions that inform the book's aesthetic. His ostensible subject, the industrial landscape from Hunter's Point to Greenpoint along and around the creek, is always viewed from afar and from outside. This constancy creates a sober objectivity reminiscent of Berlin photographer Michael Schmidt. Like Schmidt, most of his images are shot under overcast skies. Hamboussi's leaden light may be less striking than that of *The Brooklyn Navy Yard's*, but it fascinates. Alluring grays glance off tarmac and concrete, and the warm whites of warehouse roofs resonate against cream skies. Accented with the occasional blue tarp or red container, Hamboussi's surveyor's vision finds an understated aesthetic path.

Organized chronologically, *Newtown Creek* patiently circles the waterway, beginning with the razed Maspeth Gas Holders and the foundations for the Greenpoint Water Pollution Control Plant. These opening images signal the theme of change and perseverance that runs through the book, as it sustains a sophisticated commentary on the landscape in flux, its dereliction,

temporary occupation, destruction, and renewal. Across hundreds of images, the camera repeatedly observes the elements of the landscape as they develop or fade, in a kind of urbanist's fugue. Some aspects remain consistent, such as the Kosciuszko Bridge, as others develop into counterpoints. The destruction of the Norvel Concrete Silos constitutes a short but notable motif in the middle of the book, contrasting with the slow construction of the water treatment plant, which provides an overarching image that reveals the life of the creek over time. As the book reaches its later stages, several sequences amount to a recapitulation. The last of these offers a sweeping panoramic gesture, uniquely viewed from high up, before returning to ground level and the nearly completed treatment plant, the Kosciuszko Bridge, and Hunter's Point.

It is because of such relatively modest aesthetic decisions that *Newtown Creek* stands out as a thoughtful meditation upon the complex identity of the industrial landscape, particularly as opposed to the populism of more sensationalist approaches, and will provide a useful and engaging document for some time to come.

ANDREW ATKINSON DIRECTS THE MFA PROGRAM AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY'S DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN.



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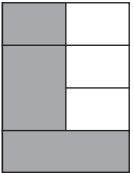
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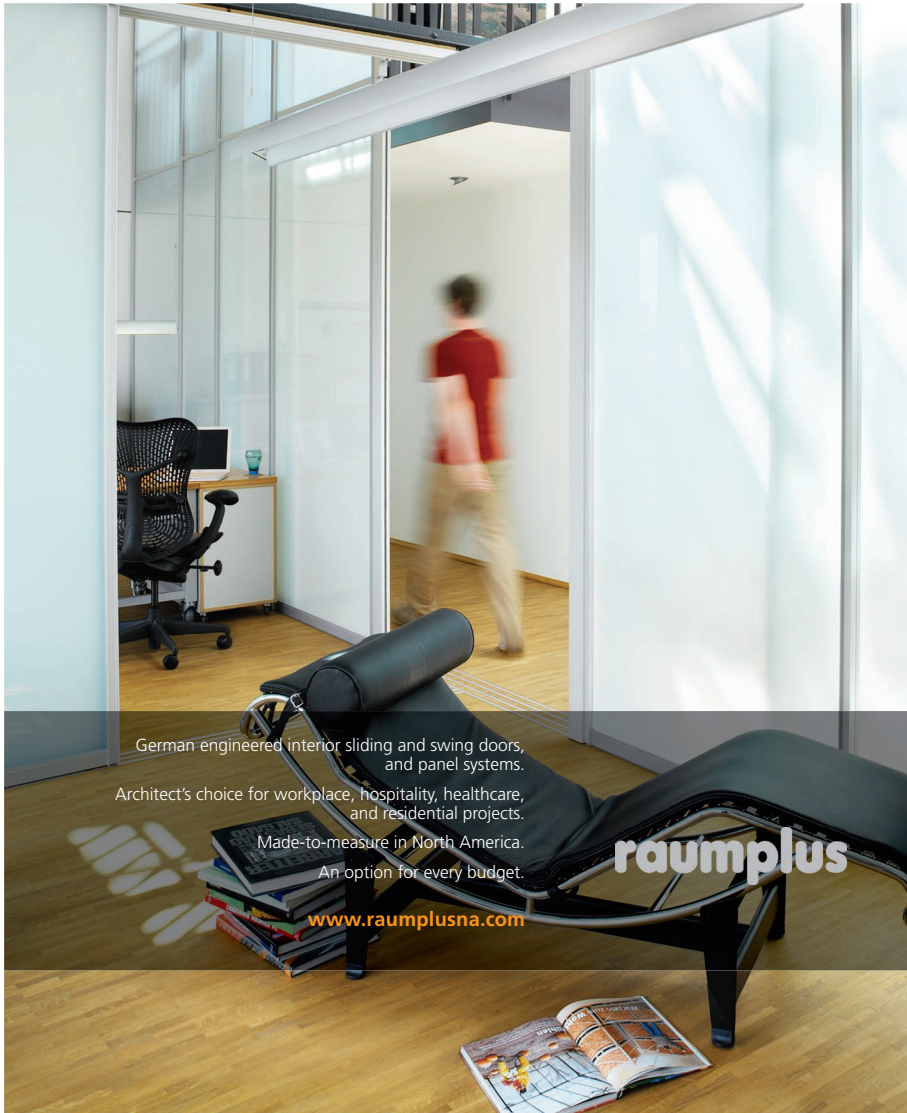
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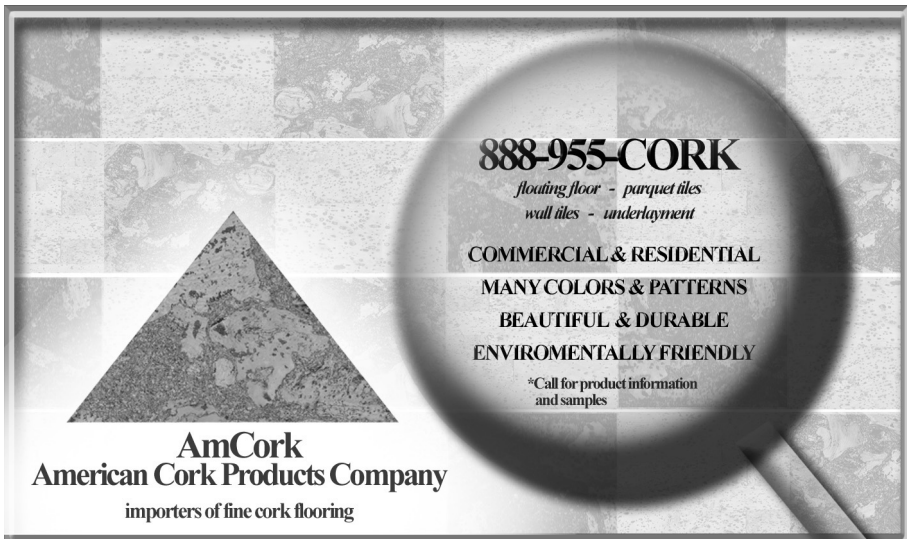
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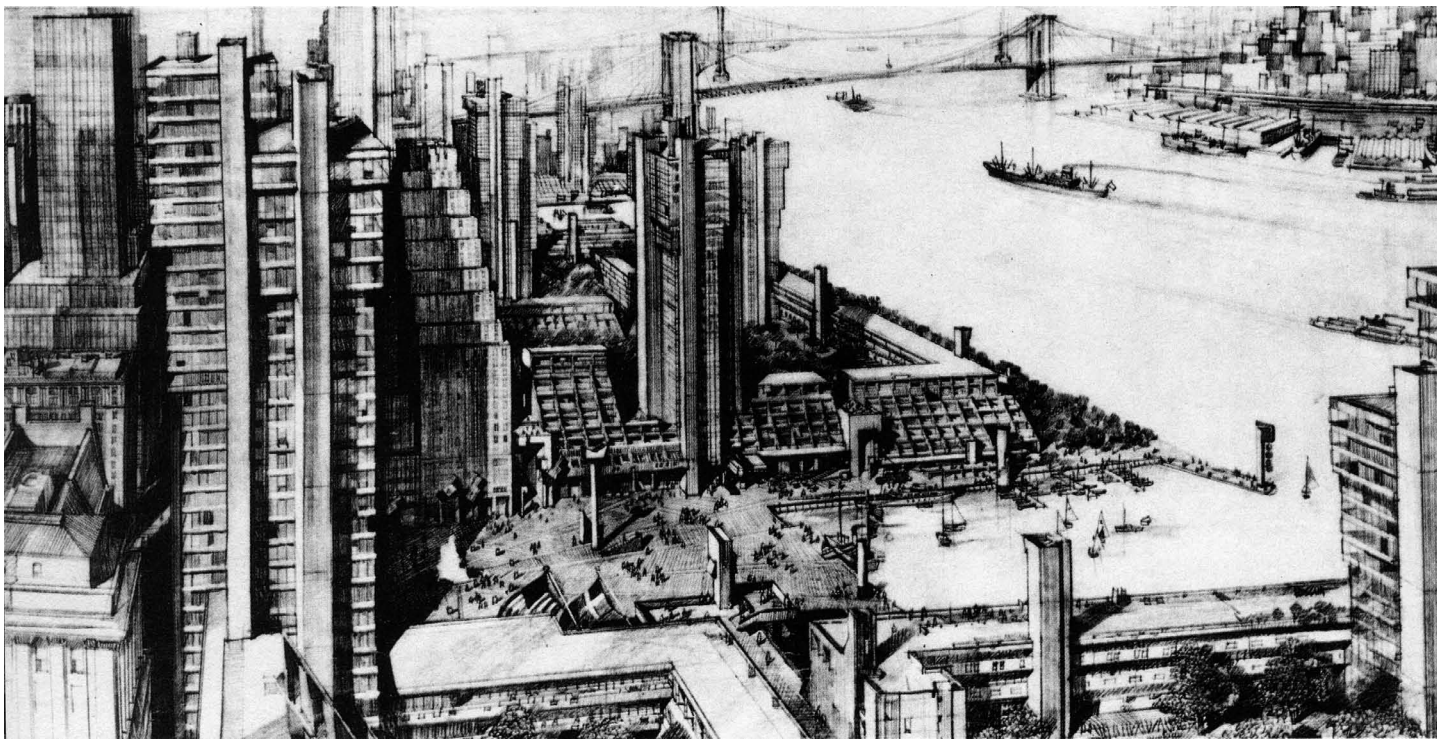
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The 1966 Lower Manhattan Plan, with landfill south of the Brooklyn Bridge.

COURTESY JAMES ROSSANT

In October 2009, two months before he died, James Rossant wrote to Carol Willis, director of the Skyscraper Museum, about his “revisionist plans” for Lower Manhattan. He also wanted to clarify for the historical record the thinking of Nelson Rockefeller, Harrison & Abramowitz, Philip Johnson, and his own team, Conklin Rossant Architects, as they collaborated on the Lower Manhattan Plan in the 1960s and 1970s that ultimately led to Battery Park City.

Knowing that Rossant was eager to see his opinions published, Willis has provided *The Architect's Newspaper* with the main text, altered only to correct grammar and spelling.

Dear Carol:

I would like to convey some memories and observations about the making of the Lower Manhattan Plan and the subsequent fate of the scheme during the past 50-odd years since. These events and thoughts were not covered in the introduction that I wrote for the re-issue of the Lower Manhattan Plan [Princeton Architectural Press], nor were they mentioned in [co-author Paul] Willen's text.

I have also not written a word for publication about the Lower Manhattan Plan and Battery Park City [BPC], although I have been interviewed by a number of writers about it since the 1970s. This long period brings us to the current time, with Battery Park City

virtually complete and through the days of post-9/11 planning and the intense controversy about whether to depress the West Side Highway or not. Another reason for returning to examine this period is to review the reception of the '66 plan and the BPC Plan based on it a few years later, and to recall my own thoughts about a few of the players involved in the design.

After our version of Battery Park City based on the Lower Manhattan Plan was made public, I was very disturbed with how the planning world considered and trashed the Nelson Rockefeller-led Harrison & Abramowitz, Philip Johnson, and Conklin Rossant Architects scheme for Battery Park City of the early '70s based *totally* on the 1966 Lower Manhattan Plan, which you were so wonderful to republish. It was a fine scheme incorporating the 1966 major planning elements, but was quite literally rushed off the stage. True, the Lower Manhattan real estate scene had crumpled by 1969, but a few years later it had recovered, and with it a demand for new space.

But in the years after its publication, and in rather disturbing language, the Battery Park City we fashioned was called an impossible megastructure, impractical, and altogether without merit. Impractical and without merit like Grand Central Complex and Park Avenue, I suppose? Or the brilliant Rockefeller “Radio City,” or the new High Line

development? Or McKim, Mead & White's Columbia University campus, which is a complex set of underground passages, linked academic spaces, centralized utilities, little known because it does its job so well connecting to Broadway at the 116th Street gateway.

From a planning perspective, what was lost in the building of the current Battery Park City was much of what the Lower Manhattan Plan set out to accomplish: direct connections to Lower Manhattan streets; a relatively inexpensive above-grade continuation of the West Side Highway; and innovative architecture combining commercial office space in low structures with residential and office towers above. In addition, the roofs of lower buildings were to become park space expansions of Lower Manhattan's open-space system. A third of the new housing in BPC was to be subsidized housing for Wall Street workers.

The Lower Manhattan Plan proposed a practical-to-build, above-grade continuation of the West Side Highway, making possible the full integration of new development like Battery Park City as part of the landfill with the streets and sidewalks of Lower Manhattan. In our Battery Park City plan, it was possible to walk into or drive into new mixed-use housing/office areas *on grade* (without the awkward overhead bridges like those that now exist across West Street) at crucial East-West streets like Wall Street and again at North-South

pedestrian crossings, way above the new highway offering sweeping views overlooking the Hudson. Nelson Rockefeller began to think, as we worked with him once a week in his New York townhouse, that it was Radio City all over again. He seemed to believe he could make it all happen, just as Radio City came together in the '30s, and just as he created the Albany Mall years later.

Too bad the economy went sour and Nelson got called away to perform on the national stage as vice president and later, presidential candidate. Since the 1930s when he managed Radio City, he loved acting as a bold, inventive planner, as when he supported the expansion of the State University system. It is my feeling that had he stayed on, despite the grim real estate period at the time, Nelson would have somehow had the power to make it happen.

Nelson grew with excitement as he worked with our little group around a big set of four drafting tables. He burst out with ideas and became more and more excited as he considered them achievable. He was enthusiastic about the concept of a people-mover linking with portals from Lower Manhattan to make the whole southern tip of the island accessible as one great market and activity area, similar to Midtown. Philip Johnson, who had never been intensely interested in city planning, was enthusiastic in his comments, eager to express

civic ceremony: entrance, compression, release. Harrison and Abramowitz were simply ready to execute the plan with the rest of us; Wally Harrison was full of stories about past successes and insights into Rockefeller's ideas, and he and Max Abramowitz were eager to help Bill Conklin and me realize our designs, even though they had designed a BPC scheme themselves a year earlier. There was none of the imposed formal symmetrical classical plans characteristic of Rockefeller designs like the Albany Mall imposed on us by H & A or by Nelson. Mayor John V. Lindsay, who came to none of the early meetings, was however left as the political partner-in-charge when Nelson was summoned to Washington. Having seen him in action early in BPC days and later as a participant in ABNY meetings, I was not impressed. The conservative and, I guess, practical Cooper Eckstut plan won the day, with no fresh ideas about integration with Lower Manhattan, with no internal North-South people-mover or any mass transportation idea, and with no concept of a mixture of commercial space with residential space. As a result, the built BPC is all residential with one hotel, and with no powerful focus such as Nelson proposed, no subsidized housing, no commercial office space, and no highway.

The Cooper Eckstut proposal, which I know very well because we were

architects of a sizeable chunk of it, was simply an effort to nostalgically recreate developments like Sutton Place and certain luxurious parts of the East Side. Care was taken with paving, a modernistic style facade treatment to make it so that it resembled the good old deco 1930s and '40s, and certain amenities were added like small squares resembling Gramercy Square, and bits and pieces of convenience retail scattered about with no real conviction. In negative terms, such as that which unfairly described our version of the BPC, the scheme was nostalgic and simplistic, with no effort to connect with the life and power of Lower Manhattan.

All these years, as we became in the minds of observers and journalists the creators of an impractical megastructure, I have wondered whether if Nelson Rockefeller had remained on the scene and seen the BPC he wanted to see built, he might have been remembered as a rich guy who became a politician and very great builder of cities.

As it turned out, the better minds in planning returned to a depressed West Side Highway scheme but it was too late, and the easy way out was to build the road above-grade, as in our proposal, in our impractical infrastructure.

I have been asked what would have been our response to other proposals made since the '70s, such as the direct link to NY airports and the linkage of the PATH now being built. My own thinking would have been that strengthening airport links was a good thing, but that pouring billions of dollars into *underground* public passageways to connect the five subway lines was counterproductive. The more practical Lower Manhattan Plan called for a network of pedestrian streets, sometimes open to car traffic and delivery, in order to get higher densities of pedestrians on the streets, where it counts.

Yours respectfully and affectionately,

JAMES ROSSANT

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